CSQ

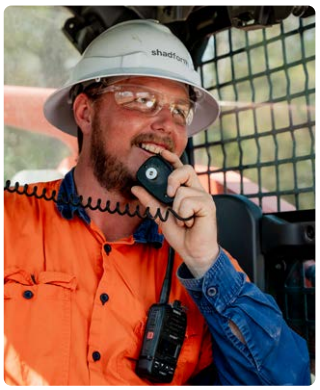
HORIZON 2032

IMAGINING QUEENSLAND'S FUTURE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE

2026 EDITION

Contents



CEO foreword

Queensland's construction industry has entered one of the most significant periods in its history. The scale of work ahead is unprecedented, the opportunity is substantial, and the challenge is clear. The 2026 edition of Horizon 2032 outlines what this next phase looks like and what workforce will be required to deliver it.

Queensland is now experiencing a prolonged construction super-cycle. Strong population growth, the transition to a future-ready energy system, and delivery of infrastructure for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games are driving construction activity to historically high levels through to 2031–32. The state's construction pipeline is forecast to average around $69 billion over the next seven years, peaking at approximately $75 billion in 2027–28 and remaining elevated thereafter.

This pipeline represents a generational opportunity for Queensland. Construction is already one of the state's largest industries, supporting economic growth, employment and community development across metropolitan and regional Queensland. The work ahead will shape how we house a growing population, deliver essential services, transition our energy system and realise the long-term legacy of the 2032 Games.

The defining issue, however, is not demand — it is delivery.

Workforce capacity remains the most critical constraint on the industry's ability to deliver this pipeline on time and on budget. Construction labour demand is projected to rise sharply, with average demand expected to increase by around 17 per cent by 2027–28 from 2025-26. On current trends, this would result in an average workforce shortfall of approximately 19,100 workers across the forecast period, with peak shortfall of up to 35,000 workers in 2027-28.

While peak pressure is now more staggered than in previous outlook, workforce strain is expected to persist over a longer period. Demand is broad-based across both building and engineering, across metropolitan and regional Queensland, and across a wide range of occupations — particularly core trades, technicians, operators and construction managers, many of which are already in persistent national shortage.

Productivity remains a structural challenge for the sector. Declining labour productivity, rising costs and increasing project complexity continue to place pressure on industry and government alike. Recent reviews and reforms, including productivity and procurement initiatives now moving into implementation, are important steps forward, but their impact will depend on sustained commitment and coordinated action across the system.

Against this backdrop, workforce development has never been more urgent and expanding the pipeline of skilled workers takes time. Apprenticeships remain central, and government and industry need to work collaboratively to encourage commencements, improve retention and look at opportunities to support this critical pathway. Participation gaps also persist. Women, Indigenous Queenslanders and skilled migrants remain under-represented in the construction workforce, representing a significant untapped opportunity to strengthen labour supply.

This year's Horizon report provides an evidence-based view of Queensland's construction pipeline, labour demand and workforce challenges through to 2032. It is intended to support informed decision-making and prompt early, coordinated action by industry, government and training partners.

The message is clear. Without sustained action to grow skills, lift productivity and broaden participation, labour constraints will continue to drive delays and cost pressures across Queensland's construction pipeline. With the right investment in people and capability, Queensland can build the workforce it needs and ensure this period of extraordinary activity delivers lasting benefits for the state.

Geoff Clare
Chief Executive Officer
Construction Skills Queensland

The global and domestic environment

Evolving global and domestic conditions continue to shape opportunities and challenges for the construction industry in Queensland. Globally, elevated uncertainty, driven by policy shifts, geopolitical tensions, and structural transitions in energy and technology, is creating an increasingly interconnected and unpredictable environment. Domestically, the industry is navigating a growing pipeline of work amid persistent challenges, alongside reviews and reforms designed to address longstanding issues and strengthen delivery capacity.

For construction, these developments have practical implications, affecting project timelines, input costs, supply-chain reliability, investment decisions, workforce availability, and operational resilience.

Geo-political risks remain high, with armed conflicts and geo-economic confrontations – including sanctions, tariffs, and investment restrictions – among the most pressing global threats[1]. The global economy is navigating an increasingly fragmented and protectionist environment. Conditions in 2025 were especially volatile, driven by historic tariff increases in the United States and the resulting adjustment pressures across affected economies. Escalating armed conflicts, particularly the current tensions in the Middle East, have further intensified global risks. Disruptions to key trade routes and rising energy prices continue to heighten economic and supply-chain vulnerabilities.

Structural shifts in technology and energy priorities, particularly in artificial intelligence and clean energy, are also reshaping investment patterns worldwide. While COP30 did not deliver a binding fossil fuel phase-out, it advanced commitments on adaptation finance and established a Just Transition Mechanism to support equitable energy transitions, signalling continued global engagement. Despite economic uncertainty and geopolitical tensions, clean-energy investment remains robust, with global energy investment estimated to have reached a record $3.3tn in 2025; more than half of that directed toward clean-energy technologies[2].

Since the last Horizon report, domestic developments include the transition to a new Queensland Government, the advancement of key infrastructure delivery plan reviews, and the outcome of the 2025 federal election. Most revised plans are now being implemented, providing greater clarity, and the policy environment remains active, with further initiatives and reforms emerging to address key construction sector issues.

Key reviews and initiatives have clarified upcoming infrastructure demand - including the 2032 Games delivery plan, Hospital Rescue Plan, Energy Roadmap, and the Residential Activation Fund. The 2025-26 Queensland Budget, released in June 2025, reinforces these priorities, outlining large-scale capital programs across transport, energy, health, education, water, housing, and the 2032 Games.

The state has also introduced a new Queensland Procurement Policy (effective January 2026) aimed at streamlining procurement and improving project delivery efficiency. The policy strengthens support for local and small businesses, promotes workforce sustainability, and reduces administrative burden.

Productivity pressures came into sharper focus in 2025, with the Queensland Government commissioning the Queensland Productivity Commission (QPC) to undertake a dedicated inquiry[3] into the state's construction industry. Declining productivity remains a central concern for both industry and government. The QPC's final report found that construction labour productivity in Queensland has declined by 9% since 2018. It identifies structural, regulatory and workforce constraints and outlines 64 recommendations across five reform areas. The Queensland Government has agreed, or agreed in principle, to around 80% of these recommendations, noting that many initiatives are already underway and further work is progressing to prioritise implementation.

Furthermore, the industry is contending with the growing impacts of increasingly frequent and severe climate-related disasters. Queensland, Australia's most disaster-affected state, has recorded 135 disaster events since the 2010-11 summer, with both frequency and intensity continuing to rise. The 2024-25 season was particularly severe: North Queensland floods, Tropical Cyclone Alfred, and Western Queensland floods caused widespread damage within a two-month period and interrupted work across most construction sites[4]. These events also drive substantial demand for rebuilding, repairs, and resilient infrastructure, further intensifying pressures on the industry.

At the federal level, the 2025 election reaffirmed the government's commitment to a renewables-led energy transition, easing uncertainty from pre-election nuclear-energy debates. The 2025-26 Federal Budget supports infrastructure, housing, modern methods of construction, including modular housing, workforce development, and regional inclusion initiatives aimed at addressing labour shortages and building a skilled, diverse workforce. Moreover, key national initiatives, such as the Building and Construction Industry Blueprint and the National Construction Strategy, represent promising first steps in tackling construction sector challenges, though their real impact will depend on effective implementation and the concrete actions that follow.

[1] World Economic Forum (2025) Global risks report 2025: A world of growing divisions, p.13. World Economic Forum, Geneva.
[2] International Energy Agency (2025) World energy investment 2025, p.6. International Energy Agency, Paris.
[3] The final report of this inquiry (submitted to government on 25 October 2025) is available at www.qpc.qld.gov.au. The state government response is available at www.treasury.qld.gov.au.
[4] Queensland Reconstruction Authority (2025) Annual report 2024–25, p.5. Queensland Reconstruction Authority, Brisbane.

Queensland maintains lead over national economic growth

Queensland's economy continues to outperform the national average, growing by an average 3.5% over the past three decades compared with 3.0% nationally. This momentum carried into 2024-25, with Gross State Product (GSP) growth rising to 2.2% after 1.7% in 2023-24 (**Figure 1**), placing Queensland behind only the ACT, which grew by 3.5%. The outlook remains positive, with Queensland Treasury forecasting growth of around 2.75% in 2025-26, supported by strengthening private investment and sustained public demand, though global geopolitical and trade uncertainties continue to pose risks.

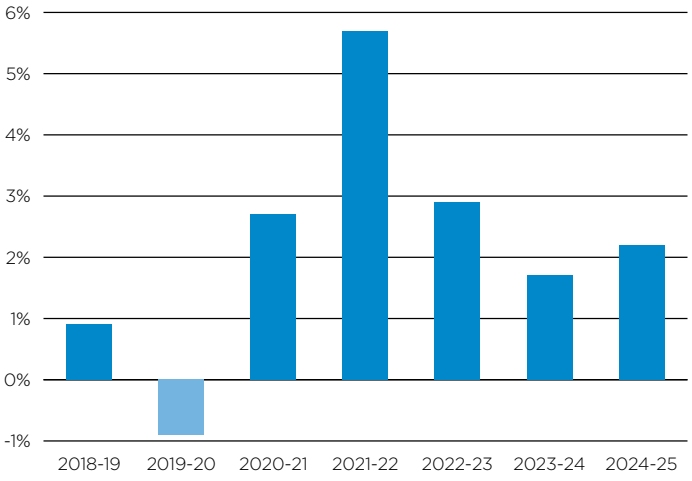
Labour market conditions in Queensland remain tight, reflecting strong competition for workers across multiple sectors. The unemployment rate averaged around 4% in 2024-25, well below pre-pandemic levels of 6.3% in 2019-20 and 5.9% in 2018-19. High job vacancies further underscore these conditions, with 71,400 positions advertised across all industries in the state in the September quarter 2025, 83% more than the same period pre-pandemic.

Inflationary pressures re-emerged in the second half of 2025, pushing both headline and underlying inflation back above the Reserve Bank of Australia's (RBA's) 2–3% target. Annual headline inflation rose to 3.8% in December 2025, up from 3.4% in the previous month. Underlying inflation, which excludes volatile items to provide a clearer view of price movements, also increased from 3.5% to 3.9%.

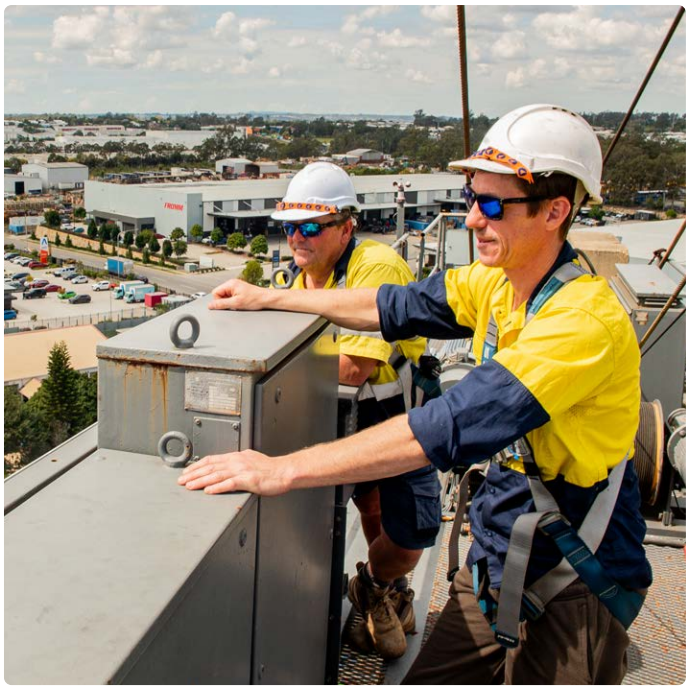
Brisbane recorded the highest annual inflation rate among all Australian capital cities, reaching 5.2% in December 2025. The housing group contributed the most to this increase, largely due to a sharp increase in electricity prices following the unwinding of government rebates.

On concerns that inflation is likely to remain above target for some time, the RBA increased the cash rate from 3.6% to 3.85% in February 2026. The recent pick-up in inflation and expectations of further increases amid ongoing tensions in the Middle East have heightened market uncertainty, shifting expectations from an easing cycle toward further rate increases.

Figure 1: GROSS STATE PRODUCT, QLD



Source: ABS. Note: Annual % change, chain volume measures.



Current trends in Queensland construction

Construction is a leading industry

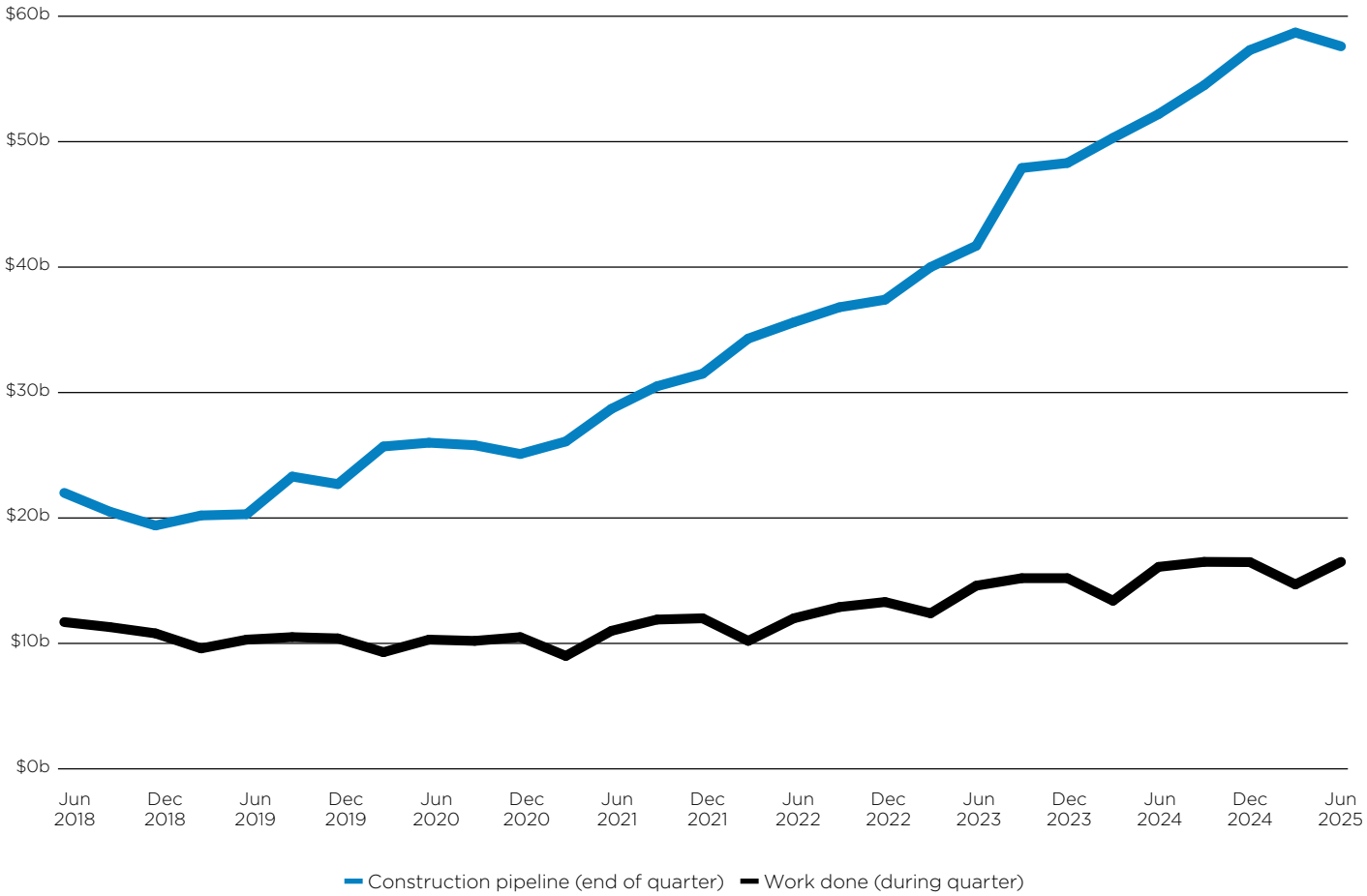
Construction is one of Queensland's most significant industries, supporting economic growth and employment across the state. In 2024-25 the sector accounted for 7.5% of the state's GSP, making it the third-largest industry after mining (10.3%) and healthcare and social assistance (8.8%). Its economic footprint is matched by its workforce presence. As of November 2025, the industry employed 288,300 people[5], or 9.6% of the state's workforce, with only healthcare employing more. The industry's business base is equally vast, with approximately 89,300 construction businesses operating in Queensland in June 2025, 57% of them sole traders.

Industry struggling to keep pace with high demand

Queensland's construction industry continues to face significant challenges resulting in a growing backlog of work. Demand is outpacing delivery, with persistently tight labour market conditions remaining a key constraint.

Over the past five years, Queensland's construction pipeline has more than doubled (**Figure 2**), rising from $26b in June 2020 to around $58b by June 2025 (current dollars). This includes $34.6b (60%) in building activity and $23.0b (40%) in engineering. However, work done has not kept pace with this rapid demand growth. As a result, the gap between the pipeline and work done is now four times larger than its pre-pandemic level, highlighting mounting pressures as more projects continue to enter the pipeline.

Figure 2: CONSTRUCTION PIPELINE VERSUS WORK DONE, QLD



Source: ABS

[5] Preceding 4-quarter average.

Current trends in Queensland construction

Early signs of a turnaround in residential approvals

After three years of decline, residential dwelling approvals in Queensland are now recovering. Approvals declined steadily from 2021-22 to 2023-24, as both demand and supply-side constraints weighed on the market (**Figure 3**). This trend reversed in 2024-25, with approvals rising 16% from the previous year, the first upswing since the pandemic-era boom of 38% in 2020-21. The rebound was broad-based across dwelling types, with approvals increasing for houses (+13%), townhouses (+30%), and apartments (+18%). Growth was evident across both South East Queensland (SEQ) and regional areas. In SEQ, approvals rose 11%, driven by strong gains in Greater Brisbane (+19%) that offset declines on the Gold Coast (-10%) and Sunshine Coast (-4%). Regional Queensland recorded increases across all localities, resulting in a 38% increase overall.

This momentum has continued into early 2025-26, with approvals up 18% in the first five months of the financial year (July–November 2025) compared to the same period in 2024-25, driven largely by a sharp rebound in apartments (+95%).

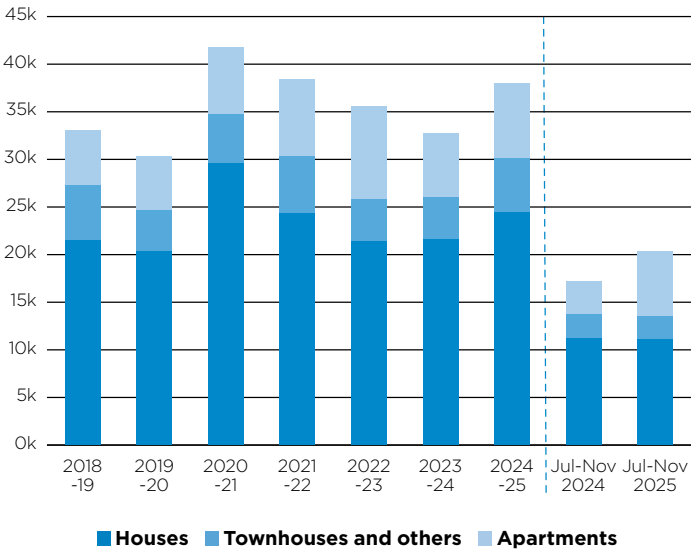
Policy settings continue to emerge in response to housing supply and affordability pressures. On the supply side, the Queensland Government is focusing on unlocking developable land, accelerating planning and approvals, and delivering essential trunk infrastructure. Central to this effort is the $2b Residential Activation Fund, for enabling infrastructure such as water, transport, and utilities, with at least half allocated to regional and remote areas. Social and affordable housing delivery is also being expanded, supported by both state and Commonwealth initiatives.

These supply measures are complemented by affordability initiatives, including stamp-duty relief for first-home buyers, extensions to the first home owner grant, the Boost to Buy shared-equity scheme, and increased rental flexibility

Non-residential approvals normalise after health-building surge

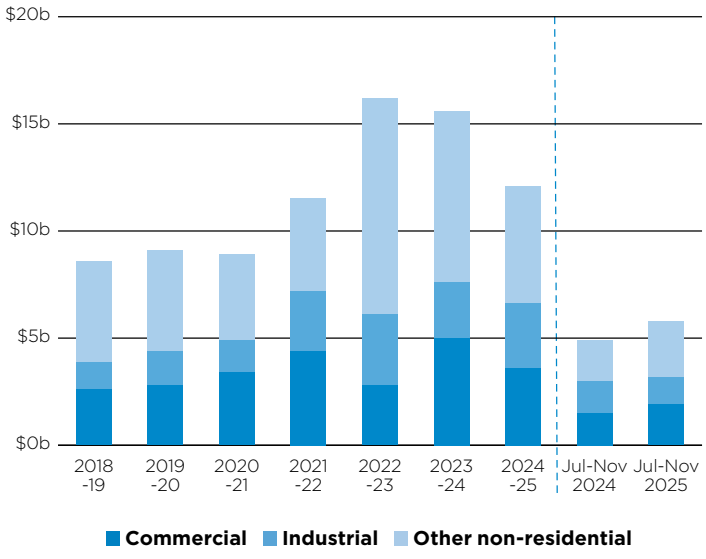
Following the pronounced health-building driven peaks in 2022-23 and 2023-24, non-residential building approvals in Queensland have begun to normalise (**Figure 4**). The earlier surge, partly reflecting cost escalation, was largely driven by health projects captured in the 'Other non-residential' category. In 2024-25, approval values eased to around $12b, yet modestly above pre-surge levels. Early data for 2025-26 indicate the pipeline remains strong, with approvals totalling $5.8b in the first five months of the financial year.

Figure 3: NUMBER OF NEW DWELLING APPROVALS BY TYPE, QLD



Source: ABS

Figure 4: VALUE OF NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING APPROVALS, QLD



Source: ABS

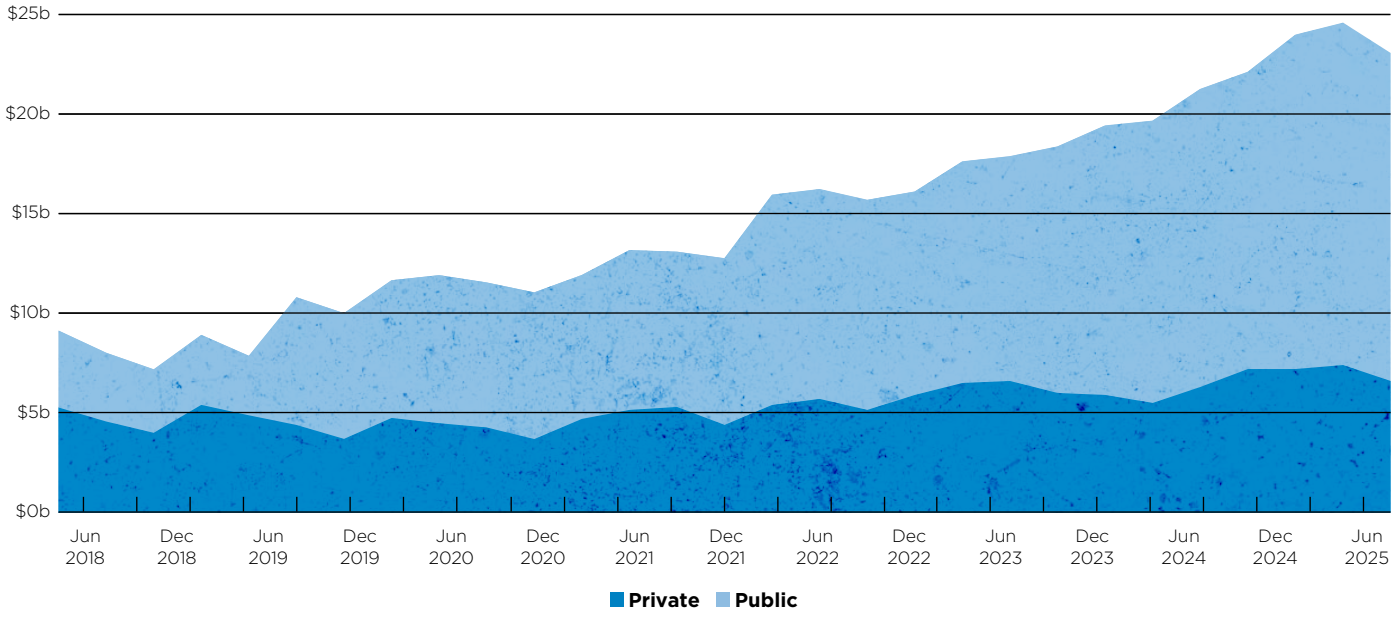
Current trends in Queensland construction

Public sector drives the engineering backlog

Queensland's engineering backlog is now predominantly driven by public-sector projects, marking a clear shift from the private-sector resource boom of 2010-11 to 2013-14. As of June 2025, the value of engineering work yet to be done in Queensland stood at $23.0b; 71% ($16.4b) in public-sector and 29% ($6.6b) in private sector (**Figure 5**).

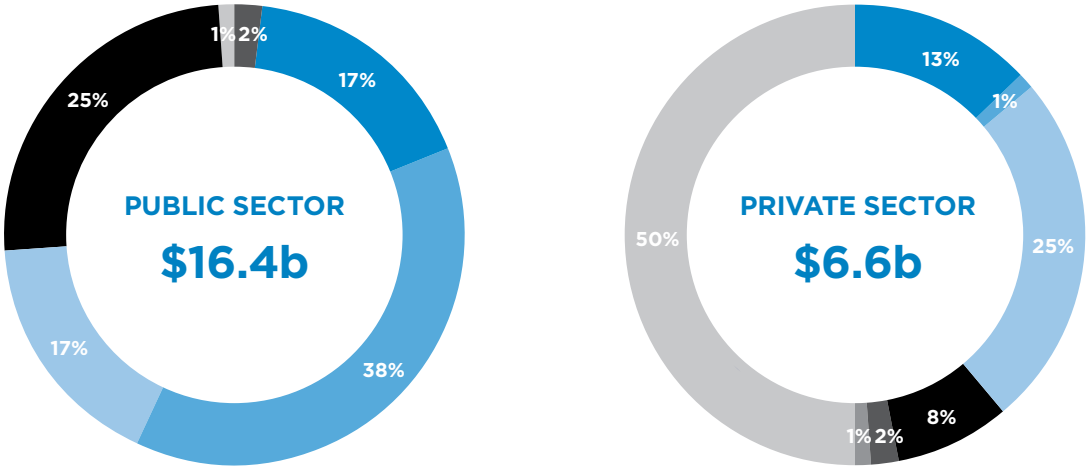
While public-sector dominates, the backlog is more diversified, comprising a mix of large-scale infrastructure programs and targeted private-sector work. Public-sector work is primarily in transport, water and sewerage, and electricity (**Figure 6a**), reflecting substantial investment in essential services and strategic infrastructure. Private-sector activity (**Figure 6b**) is concentrated in heavy industry and electricity projects, reflecting ongoing investment in energy generation and industrial capacity across Queensland.

Figure 5: ENGINEERING WORK YET TO BE DONE BY SECTOR, QLD



Source: ABS

Figure 6a & 6b: DISTRIBUTION OF ENGINEERING WORK YET TO BE DONE BY SECTOR (JUNE 2025), QLD



Source: ABS

Current trends in Queensland construction

Employment and training insights

The combination of new work flowing into an already large backlog, together with concurrent activity across multiple sectors and regions, is translating into greater demand for construction workers.

Queensland's construction industry employed approximately 288,300 workers in November 2025, which is 4.4% more than November 2024 and 22% more than five years earlier. Employment has grown across all sub-industries over this period, with building construction rising to 79,100 workers (+43%), construction services reaching 176,800 (+18%), and heavy and civil engineering increasing to 31,500 (+4%)[6].

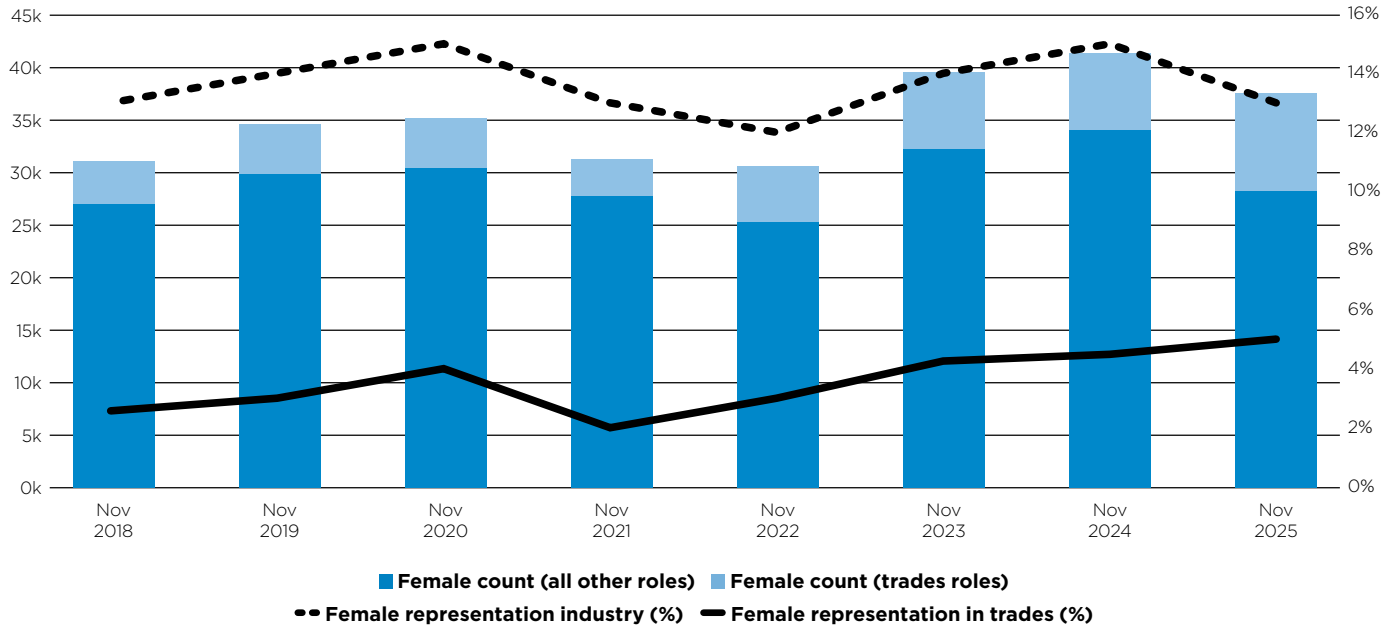
Despite this overall growth, low female participation persists. Women make up nearly half of Queensland's total workforce but represent only 13% of construction industry employment and just 5% of trades roles. As of November 2025, the industry employed 37,500 women, a 9.2% decline over the year, though still 6.6% higher than five years earlier (**Figure 7**). The number of women in trade roles has improved over the past five years, rising from 4,800 to 9,300.

Increasing female participation over time, particularly in trade roles, would contribute to supporting the industry's future workforce needs.

The industry's persistent struggle to find workers is reflected in the growing number of unfilled vacancies. Internet vacancies for construction trades have rebounded strongly from pandemic lows, signalling rising demand for workers. As of November 2025, there were around 5,600 vacancies[7] for construction trades roles; 40% more than the same period five years ago.

Without a stronger pipeline of workers entering the industry, the risk of project delays and rising delivery costs will increase, placing further pressure on an already stretched construction sector.

Figure 7: FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, QLD



Source: ABS, CSQ

[6] 1,000 in construction not further defined (nfd) category.

[7] Source: Jobs and Skills, Australia, CSQ.

Current trends in Queensland construction

Apprenticeships provide an important pathway into the construction industry. In 2024-25 (**Figure 8**), approximately 29,900 construction apprentices were in-training across Queensland, with 77% employed within the construction industry and 23% in other industries. This represents a 5.5% decline from 2023-24 but remains 43% higher than 2019-20, reflecting the lasting impact of COVID-era initiatives such as the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements (BAC) and Completing Apprenticeship Commencements (CAC) schemes. These programs drove a surge in commencements in 2020-21 (+67%) and 2021-22 (+12%). As apprenticeships typically take up to four years to complete, the elevated commencements from 2021 and 2022 are expected to strengthen the pool of qualified workers through 2025 and 2026.

While commencements have moderated since the closure of these schemes, they remain above pre-pandemic levels. In 2024-25, commencements were around 31% higher than in 2019-20, the comparable pre-subsidy period. Growth has been broad-based across regions, with commencements up 30% in SEQ and 32% in regional areas.

However, if the recent decline continues, it risks slowing growth in the training pipeline at a time of expanding workforce demand. After peaking at a historic high of around 15,800 in 2021-22, commencements fell to approximately 11,000 in 2024-25, a decline of about 30%. This downturn has been widespread across trades, including carpenters and joiners (-40%), painters (-50%), plumbers (-21%), earthmoving plant operators (-33%), electricians (-12%), and air-conditioning mechanics (-11%).

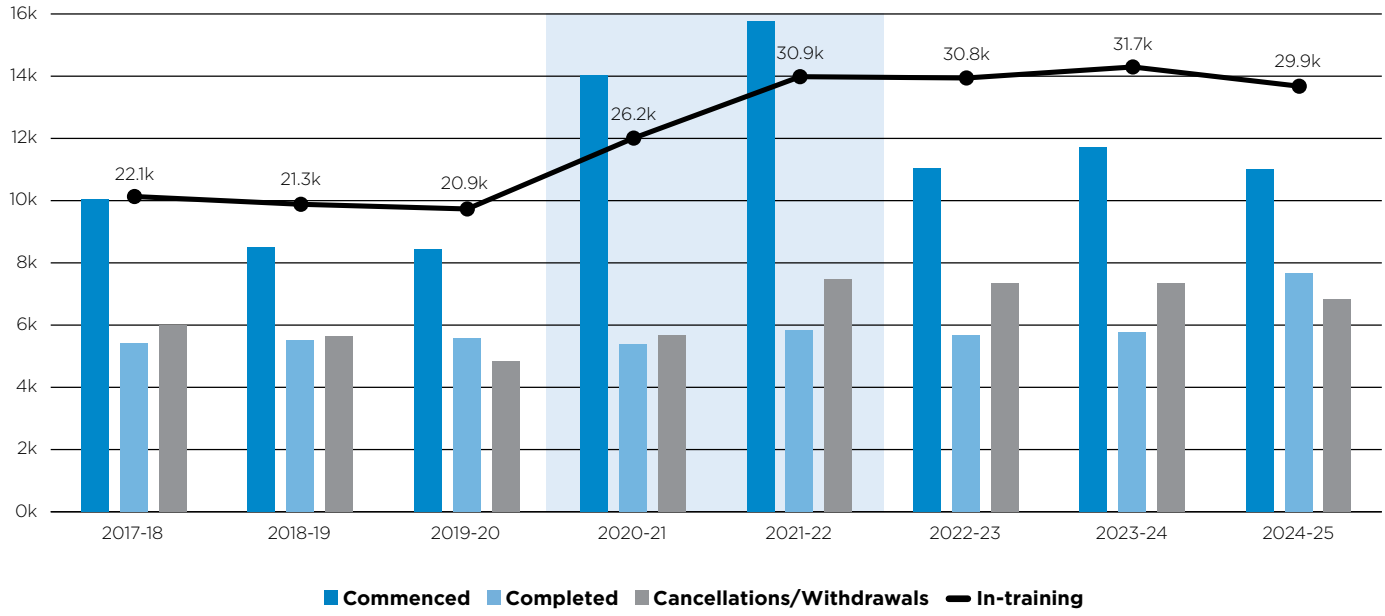
Although commencements remain above pre-pandemic levels, the breadth of this pullback points to growing supply risks across key trades at a time of sustained construction demand.

Moreover, cancellations and withdrawals remain elevated, averaging 7,247 between 2021-22 and 2024-25, 31% higher than the average of 5,529 recorded across 2017-18 to 2020-21. This largely reflects the higher number of apprentices commencing in recent years, which naturally leads to more cancellations and withdrawals.

Completion outcomes have shown gradual improvement. According to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 59% of Queensland trade apprentices who started in 2018 completed their training within six years, up 1.1 percentage points from the 2017 cohort. Construction trades saw the largest improvement, with the six-year completion rate rising 2.5 percentage points to 54.9%.

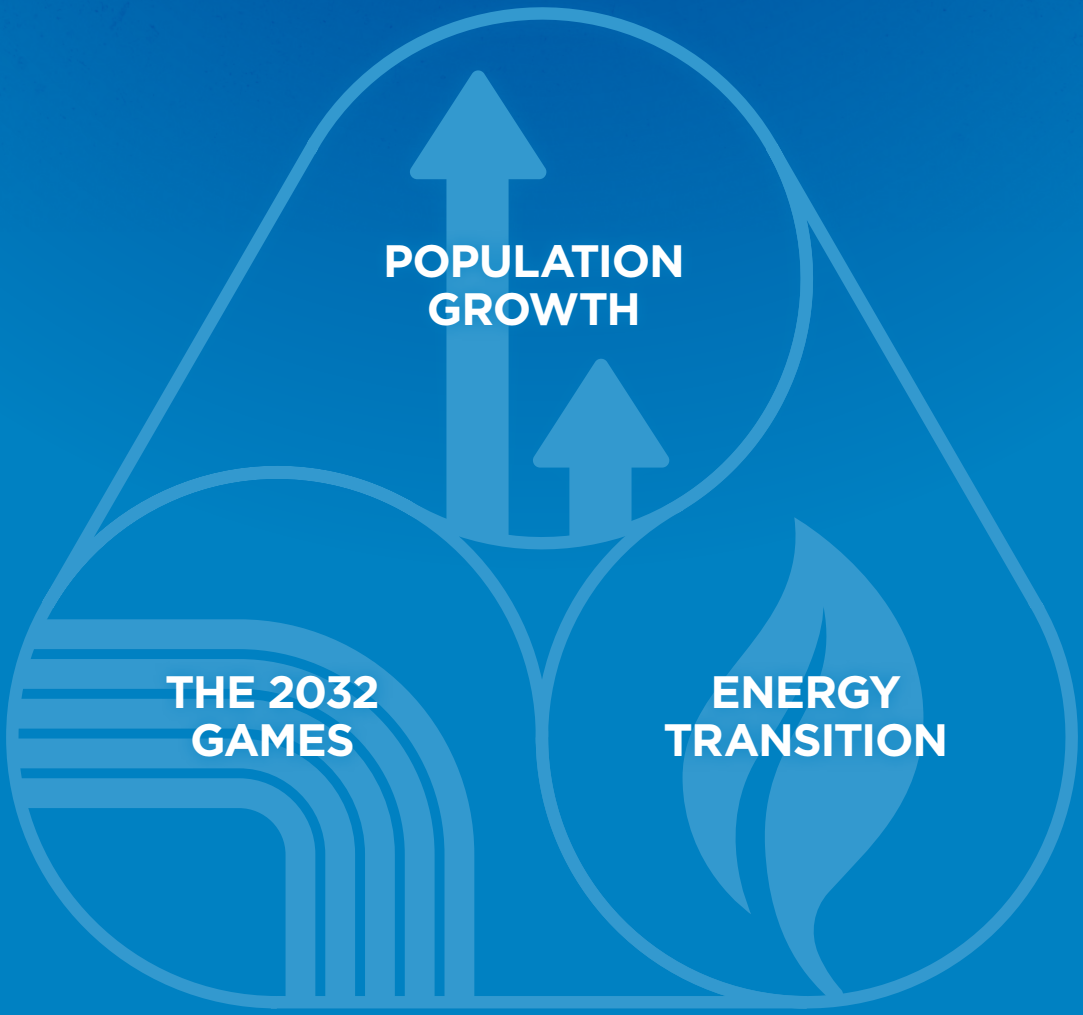
Encouraging new entrants into training, broadening diversity and improving retention remain critical to sustaining the workforce pipeline. In 2024-25, of the 29,900 apprentices in-training in Queensland, 6.5% were female and 7.2% were Indigenous. When narrowed to the 22,910 apprentices training specifically within the construction industry, these shares were lower, with 4.8% female and 6.5% Indigenous.

Figure 8: CONSTRUCTION APPRENTICES, QLD



Source: NCVER, CSQ. Note: Shaded area shows the period when the BAC subsidy applied to new commencements (Oct 2020–Jun 2022); these apprentices were later supported under the CAC.

Key forces driving Queensland construction momentum



Population growth

Queensland's population growth continues to drive strong demand for social and economic infrastructure. The state's population is now around 5.7 million, up 9.8% since 2019-20, and is expected to reach 6.2 million by 2031-32.

The 2032 Games

Delivery for the Games is now progressing decisively from planning into preparatory and early works. A rapid pick-up in activity is expected from 2026-27 through 2030-31, as Games venues and villages projects move into full construction.

Energy transition

A revised energy roadmap is supporting strong construction activity across electricity generation, storage, and transmission, with regional Queensland remaining central to the transition.

Key forces driving Queensland construction momentum

Queensland's construction sector is entering a defining period, with strong population growth, preparations for the 2032 Games, and the transition to a future-ready energy network driving record infrastructure investment through to 2031-32. While the core drivers of construction demand remain unchanged, their momentum has shifted. Population growth has eased from record highs but remains above historical trends, Games-related delivery has accelerated, and the release of a new Energy Roadmap has reshaped the state's long-term energy transition pathway.

Population growth driving construction demand

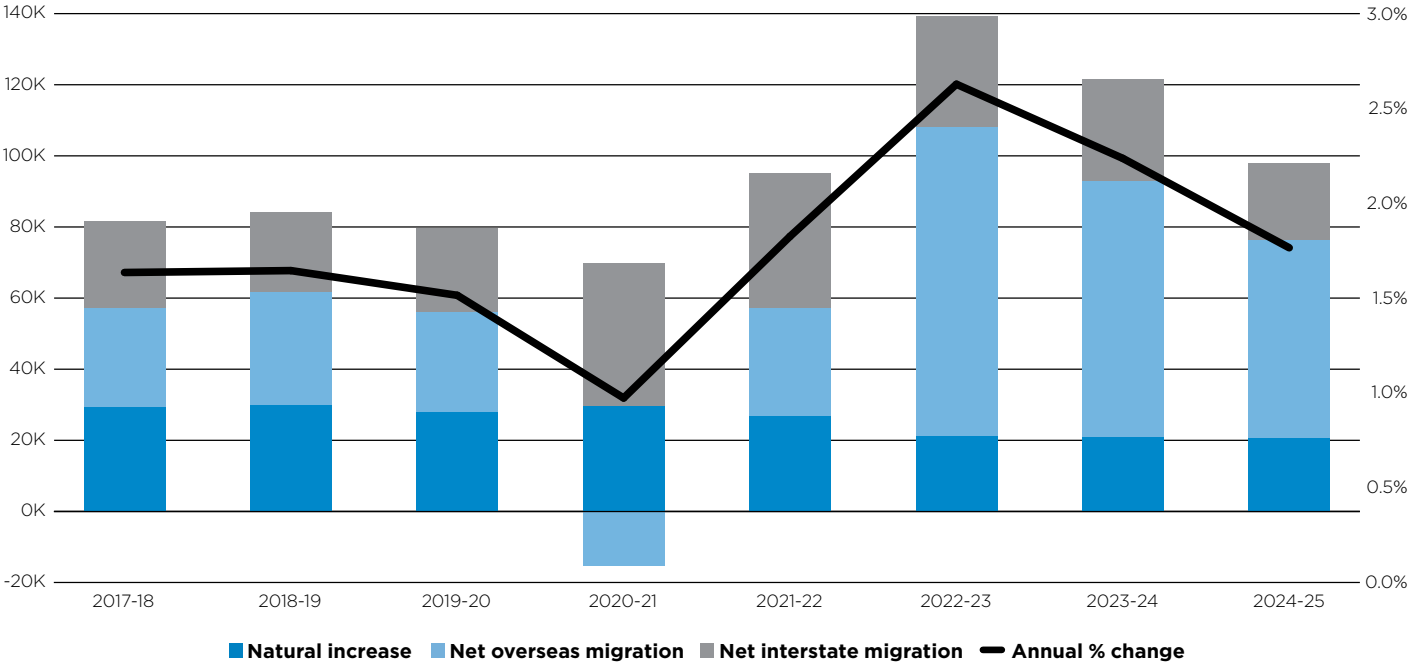
Queensland's population growth continues to drive demand for social and economic infrastructure, even as recent momentum has moderated. After holding steady at around 1.5–1.6% annually in the years leading up to the pandemic, population growth slowed to 1.0% in 2020-21 due to border closures (**Figure 9**).

From mid-2021, growth accelerated sharply, peaking at 2.6% in 2022-23, one of the strongest surges in recent history. Net overseas migration drove most of this increase, accounting for 62% of the 139,000 additional residents, followed by net interstate migration at 23%, and natural increase at 15%. Growth remained strong in 2023-24 at 2.2%, again largely supported by net overseas migration.

Although growth has eased since then to 1.8% in 2024-25 as migration patterns normalise, it remains elevated relative to historical trends.

Queensland's population is now around 5.7 million, representing a 9.8% increase since 2019-20. It is projected to grow by around 1.6% in 2025-26 and 1.5% in 2026-27, reaching approximately 6.2 million by 2031-32[8].

Figure 9: POPULATION GROWTH AND COMPONENTS OF CHANGE, QLD



Source: ABS

[8] Queensland Government population projections (2023 edition update), medium series, available at www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/population/population-projections.

Key forces driving Queensland construction momentum

Image: Brisbane Stadium - artist impression

Image: Brisbane Stadium - artist impression

Momentum from the 2032 Games

The 2032 Games are a major structural driver of construction activity in Queensland, with delivery now progressing decisively from planning into preparatory and early works. The revised 2032 Delivery Plan[9], released in March 2025, outlines the state's commitments across venues, athlete villages, transport links, and supporting infrastructure, backed by coordinated state and federal funding. Since its release, several foundational milestones have been achieved. In June 2025, legislation was passed to streamline planning approvals for Games-related developments, reducing regulatory risk and enabling faster delivery. Governance has also been strengthened through the establishment of the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA), which now oversees delivery and procurement frameworks.

Many Games projects have moved into site investigations, early works, and procurement, marking the start of a multi-year surge in construction demand. A rapid pick-up in activity is expected from 2026-27 through 2030-31, as projects move into full construction phases. This acceleration is likely to place significant pressure on skilled labour, as multiple large Games projects coincide with other major work across the state's construction pipeline.

The scope of Games-related construction extends beyond SEQ, with upgrades planned for regional venues in Cairns, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and other centres. Broader transport, connectivity, and urban-renewal initiatives, many designed to deliver long-term legacy outcomes, are also being accelerated as part of the integrated Games program, adding depth to the overall infrastructure pipeline.

A recalibrated energy pathway reshaping the construction profile

Queensland's energy transition remains a major driver of construction activity, with 2025 marking a strategic reset in the state's long-term energy framework. The Queensland Energy Roadmap, released in October 2025, prioritises a more flexible, market-oriented approach that balances affordability, reliability and private-sector investment while maintaining a net-zero commitment by 2050[10]. The strategy also supports continued operation of coal and gas-fired assets where technically and economically viable, extending their role alongside renewable generation and storage in meeting system demand.

These strategic directions are embedded in law through the Energy Roadmap Amendment Act 2025, officially passed on 19 December 2025, which amends the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act 2024 to give legal effect to the updated Roadmap[11]. Key developments include the repeal of legislated renewable energy targets, reframing the Energy Act to facilitate an affordable and reliable energy system, and replacing the Renewable Energy Zone framework with Regional Energy Hubs to support market-led infrastructure coordination. The Act also strengthens frameworks for priority transmission investment and enables delivery of major projects such as CopperString.

For the construction sector, this revised pathway sustains a broad base of activity across generation, storage, transmission, and system-strengthening works. While investment is shifting from large scale projects to a more diversified and steady delivery phase, regional Queensland remains central to the transition.

Overall, the Energy Roadmap positions Queensland's energy transition as a structural driver of construction demand throughout the decade.

[9] www.delivering2032.com.au/2032-delivery-plan
[10] Queensland Government. (2025). Queensland Energy Roadmap 2025. Queensland Treasury.
[11] Queensland Parliament. (2025). Energy Roadmap Amendment Act 2025. Assented 19 December 2025.
Brisbane Stadium image source: www.delivering2032.com.au

Queensland construction pipeline and labour projections to 2032

Queensland has a substantial pipeline of construction activity over the seven years to 2031-32. The scale and diversity of projects in the pipeline highlight the breadth of public policy priorities requiring infrastructure solutions, including transport upgrades, energy transition, expanded water supply, housing, defence, and facilities for the 2032 Games. In the 2025-26 budget, the Queensland Government committed to a record $116.8b[12] infrastructure investment over four years, with $29.3b allocated to capital works in 2025-26 alone.

This robust pipeline is expected to place upward pressure on construction labour demand throughout the forecast period[13]. Timely and cost-effective delivery of work will rely heavily on the availability of a suitably skilled workforce, highlighting the importance of workforce planning and capability development across the sector.

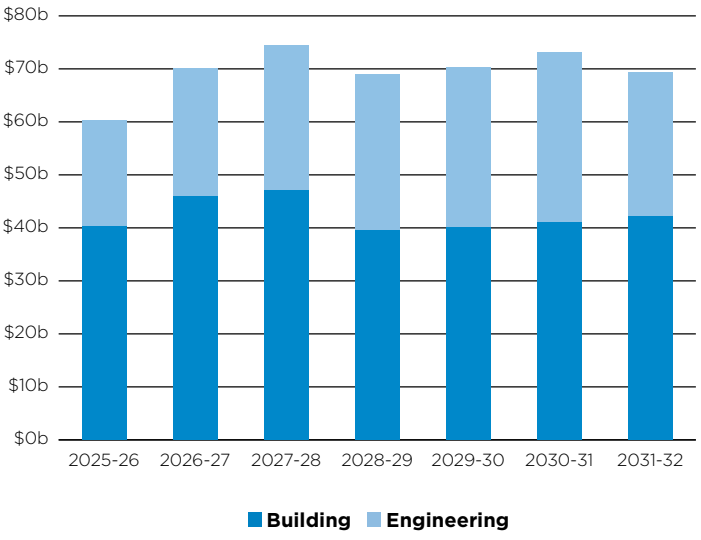
Total construction pipeline and labour demand

Queensland's construction pipeline is forecast to average approximately $69b over the seven-year period (**see Snapshot 1**). It is projected to increase from approximately $60b in the current financial year and peak at around $75b in 2027-28 (**Figure 10**). Peak activity has shifted one year later compared with last year's projected $77b peak in 2026-27, when building and engineering activity were expected to peak concurrently. While the peak is modestly lower, projected activity is stronger in later years compared with the previous outlook, with building now peaking in 2027-28 and engineering in 2030-31, reflecting a more sequenced delivery program.

Following this peak, the pipeline is expected to remain elevated at above $65b for the remainder of the forecast period, reflecting sustained activity across both building and engineering projects.

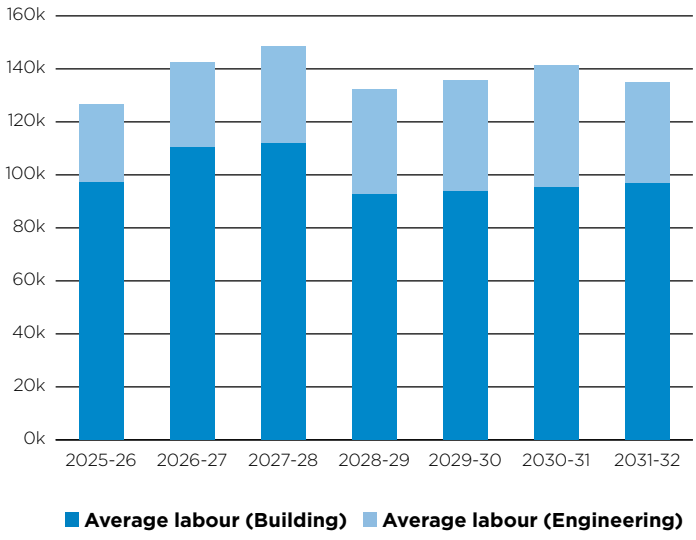
Delivering this robust construction pipeline will require a larger construction workforce (**Figure 11**). Average labour demand is expected to rise from approximately 126,600 in 2025-26 to a peak of 148,300 in 2027-28, representing an increase of 17%. Beyond this peak, average labour demand is forecast to remain high at above 130,000 workers.

Figure 10: CONSTRUCTION PIPELINE, QLD



Source: CSQ

Figure 11: AVERAGE LABOUR DEMAND, QLD



Source: CSQ

[12] Not all $116b is construction spend. The capital program of $29.3b includes $24.25b capital purchases and $5.06b capital grants.

[13] The labour projections in this report include workers in 67 construction-relevant occupations. This includes those directly involved in construction work such as tradespeople like carpenters and joiners, bricklayers and stonemasons, structural steel construction workers etc, and those who oversee, plan, and/or manage construction work like construction managers and civil engineering professionals etc. It does not include workers in support roles, such as clerical and administrative staff, accountants, or solicitors, who are not directly engaged in construction work. Note that all forecasts presented in this report are based on the available information as of 19th December 2025. Complete accuracy of these forecasts should not be assumed. Variation above or below the forecasts provided is to be expected as projections rely on the assumptions as well as available data and information at the time of preparation. Any significant updates or changes to engineering and/or non-residential project data may impact the forecasted outlook.

Building sector

Building pipeline and labour projections

The state's building pipeline is forecast to range from approximately $39b to $47b (**Figure 12**), averaging $42b across the seven-year horizon.

The relatively higher levels observed in the initial years (2025-26 to 2027-28) reflect the distribution of the existing building sector backlog over this period. As of June 2025, Queensland's building pipeline (commenced but unfinished work and approved work yet to begin) stood at $34.6b. To estimate the average labour requirement, this backlog has been distributed across the forecast horizon[14].

Peak activity has moved one year out to 2027-28 compared to the projection last year, largely reflecting the ongoing impact of backlog work[15].

Consistent with the building pipeline, average construction labour demand is projected to increase from around 97,000 workers in 2025-26 to approximately 112,100 by 2027-28, an increase of about 16% (**Figure 13**). Beyond this period, labour requirements are anticipated to remain elevated at above 90,000 workers.

Figure 12: BUILDING PIPELINE, BY SUB-SECTOR, QLD

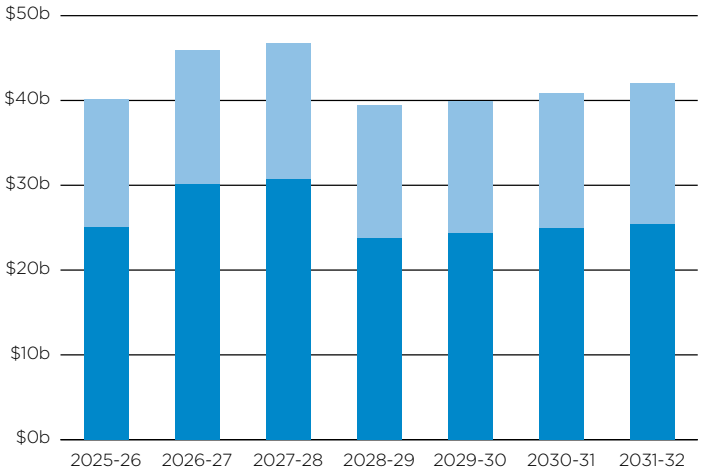
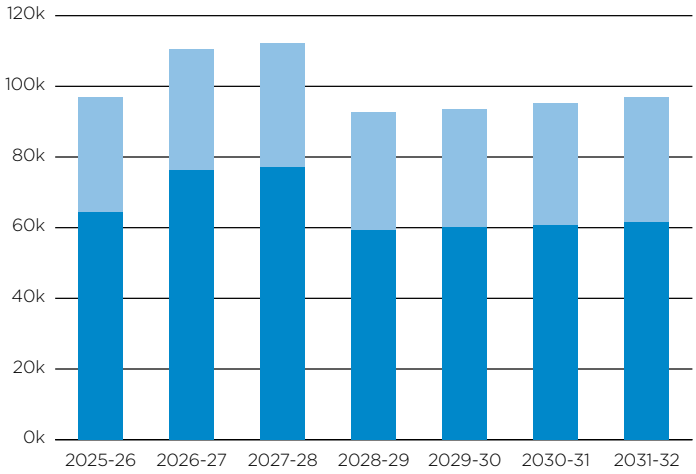


Figure 13: AVERAGE LABOUR DEMAND, BUILDING PIPELINE, QLD



Residential **Non-residential**

Source: CSQ

[14] Of the $34.6b building sector backlog, $18.1b is residential and $16.5b non-residential. Residential activity is spread over the first three years. Non-residential activity is similarly spread across the first three years, except for health projects, which are allocated over a longer horizon. Finer details on the distribution of each sector are provided in the residential and non-residential sections.

[15] Building activity backlog is mainly concentrated across the first 3 financial years. With the forecast period now commencing from 2025-26, the persistence of this backlog has shifted the peak out by a year.

Building sector

Key occupations in demand

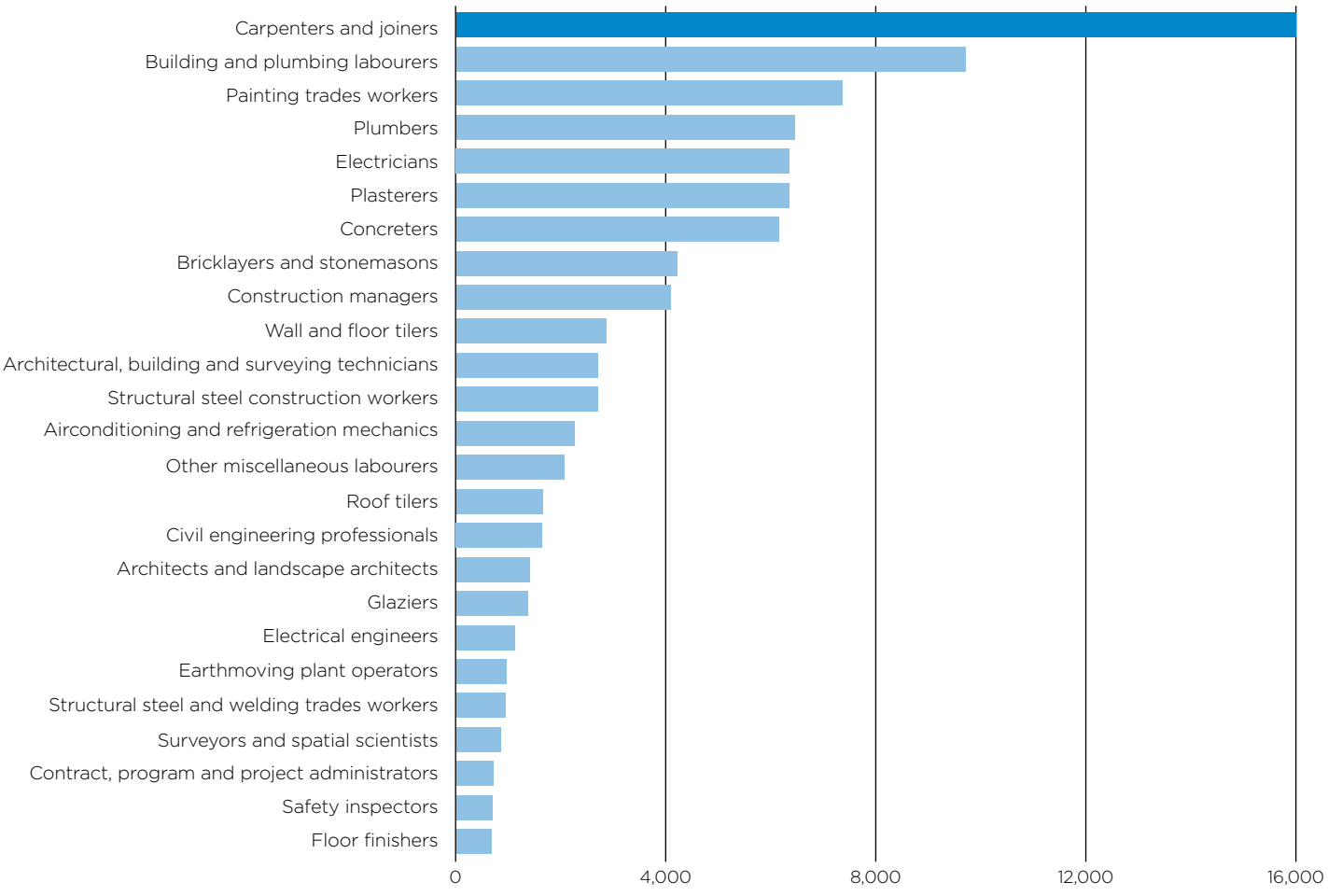
Delivering Queensland's building pipeline will place strong and sustained demand on a broad range of construction occupations, with the greatest pressures expected in trade roles (**Figure 14**)[16]. Core trades, including carpenters and joiners, building and plumbing labourers, painting trades workers, plumbers, electricians, plasterers, bricklayers and stonemasons are projected to be most in demand, reflecting their central role in delivering building projects. In addition, demand for concreters, earthmoving and plant operators, and construction managers are also expected to be strong.

Collectively, these roles illustrate the breadth of skills required to support Queensland's robust building pipeline, from on-site trades and technical specialists to operators and managers overseeing delivery.

National labour market insights from Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)[17] highlight the scale of the challenge in filling key construction roles. The 2025 Occupation Shortage List shows that of the 264 occupations in shortage in both 2024 and 2025, around 38% (99 occupations) were technicians and trades workers, with many concentrated in construction-related trades. Over the longer term, 51% of the 139 occupations in persistent shortage between 2021 and 2025 also fell into this category, reinforcing construction as one of the sectors facing the most sustained supply pressures. Most of Queensland's construction-industry trades occupations are similarly classified as being in shortage.

With many of Queensland's high-demand occupations mirroring national shortages, the state faces a critical challenge in securing the construction workforce needed to deliver its growing pipeline.

Figure 14: KEY CONSTRUCTION OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND (7 YEAR AVERAGE) - BUILDING SECTOR, QLD



Source: CSQ

[16] Figure 14 shows the top 25 occupations in demand, out of the 59 occupations included in this analysis for the building sector.

[17] Jobs and Skills Australia. (2025). 2025 Occupation Shortage List: Key findings report (p.5). October 2025.

Building sector

Residential building pipeline forecast

The state's residential building pipeline is projected to average $26.4b over the seven-year horizon, ranging between $24b and $31b (**Figure 15**).

Over the first three financial years, the pipeline is forecast to average $29b, reflecting both forecast new activity and the delivery of a substantial accumulated backlog. As of June 2025, Queensland's residential construction backlog stood at $18.1b. This backlog reflects prolonged delivery constraints that have slowed the pace of home construction. For workforce estimation, the backlog is assumed to be progressively delivered over the next three years[18], materially lifting near-term activity and intensifying labour requirements as backlog delivery coincides with new approvals.

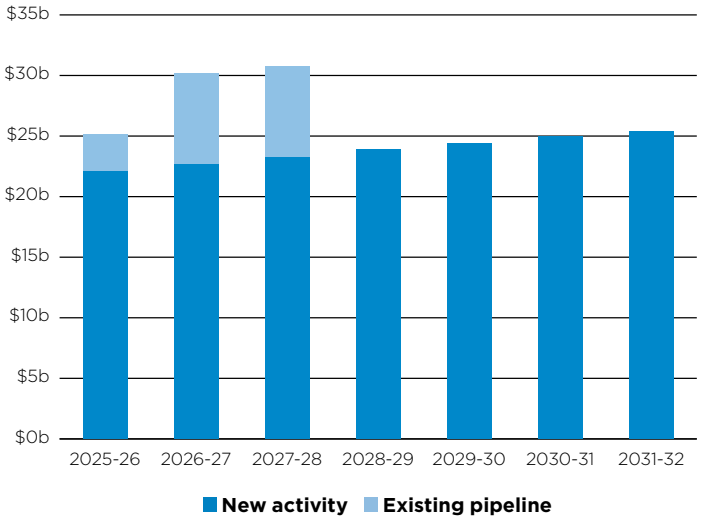
For the remainder of the forecast period (2028-29 to 2031-32), the residential pipeline is forecast to average around $25b, reflecting continued demand for housing in Queensland.

Delivering both backlog and new residential activity is projected to push average construction labour demand (**Figure 16**) from around 64,400 workers in 2025-26 to a peak of 77,200 in 2027-28, before easing slightly and remaining elevated at about 60,000 for the remainder of the forecast period.

Residential approvals in Queensland are beginning to recover after three consecutive years of decline between 2021-22 and 2023-24. Although underlying demand remains strong, several headwinds continue to weigh on the sector. The pace of recovery will depend on how these pressures ease, including ongoing interest-rate uncertainty, elevated construction costs, broader cost-of-living challenges, and persistent supply-side constraints.

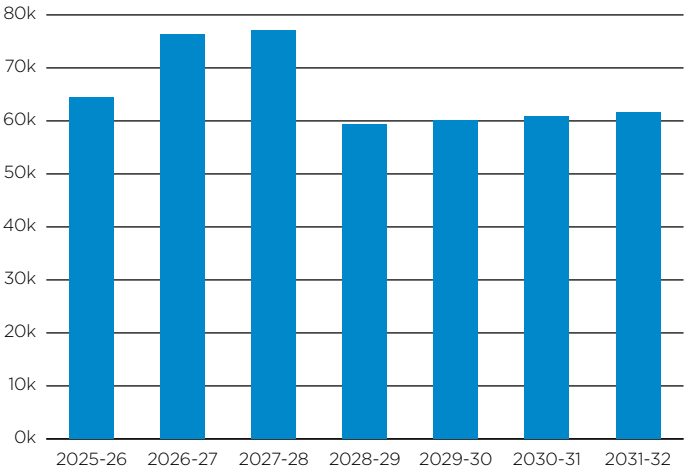
In response, the Queensland Government has introduced a suite of measures to support housing, including first-home buyer incentives, targeted investment in social and affordable housing, and initiatives to unlock development-ready land. Strong demand fundamentals are expected to underpin residential construction activity throughout the forecast period.

Figure 15: RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PIPELINE, QLD



Source: CSQ

Figure 16: AVERAGE LABOUR DEMAND, RESIDENTIAL, QLD



Source: CSQ

[18] The residential backlog of $18.1b is distributed across the 3 years as follows: $3.1b (2025-26), $7.5b (2026-27) and $7.5b (2027-28).

Building sector

Non-residential building pipeline forecast

Queensland's non-residential pipeline is projected to range between approximately $15b and $17b across the forecast period (**Figure 17**). The elevated activity in the first three financial years reflects the concentration of the state's existing non-residential backlog across these years. As of June 2025, Queensland has a non-residential backlog of $16.5b. For workforce modelling, this backlog is assumed to be progressively delivered over the next three years, except for health-related projects, which are distributed over a longer horizon reflecting their staged delivery profiles[19].

Health construction represents a large component of the non-residential pipeline, driven by increased public investment under the state's $18b Hospital Rescue Plan. Toward the latter years of the horizon, the 2032 Games–related building projects[20] are expected to emerge more materially, further supporting a robust non-residential construction pipeline (**see Snapshot 2**).

Meeting this workload will require more construction workers. Average labour demand for non-residential construction is projected to rise from approximately 32,600 construction workers in 2025-26 to peak at 35,400 in 2031-32 (**Figure 18**), as existing backlog is worked through, and new projects enter the pipeline.

Figure 17: NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PIPELINE, QLD

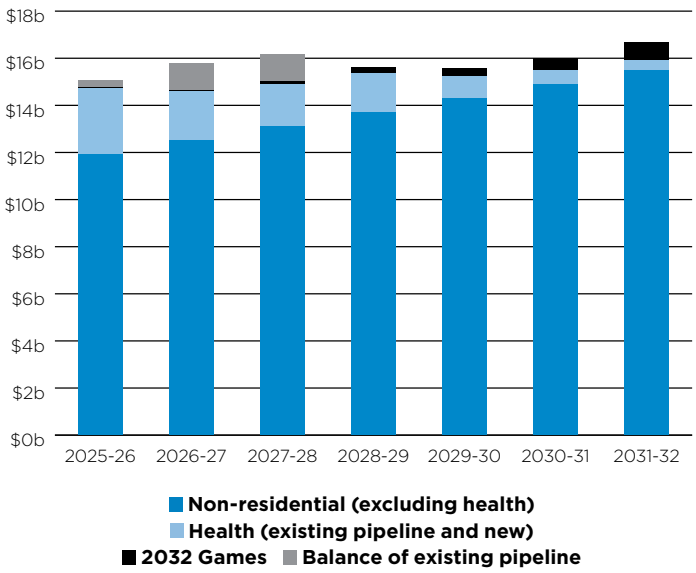
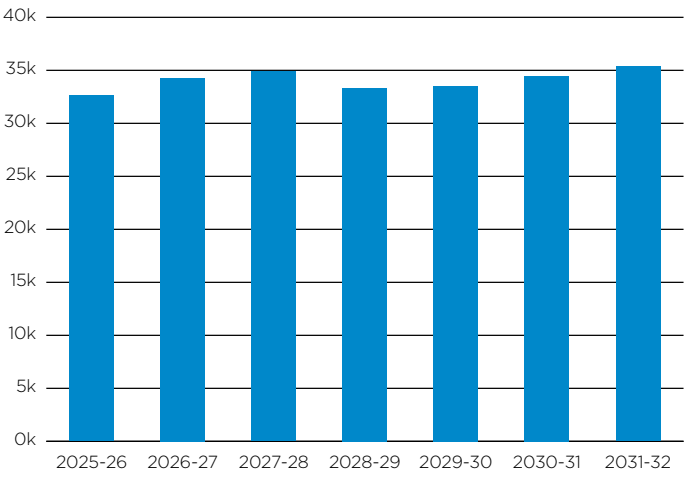


Figure 18: AVERAGE LABOUR DEMAND, NON-RESIDENTIAL, QLD



Source: CSQ

[19] For labour demand estimation, the forecasts incorporate the state's existing non-residential backlog of $16.5b as of June 2025. This existing backlog ($16.5b) has been distributed across the forecast period as follows: the health sector is treated separately from other non-residential activity, with forecast new, and existing health sector backlog ($8b) allocated across the forecast period based on project information and expected delivery timelines. Of the remaining existing backlog ($8.5b), internal analysis indicates about 70% is captured in the project data used in the forecast, hence the remaining 30% is explicitly distributed across 2025-26 to 2027-28.

[20] For the Games projects, where project data is explicit, projects are classified as building or engineering, while bundled projects have not been split and are assigned based on the dominant activity. Even explicitly classified projects may contain elements of the other type—for example, building projects may include some engineering components and vice versa; these overlaps are not separately accounted for. These classifications are indicative and should be interpreted within this context.

Engineering sector

Engineering pipeline and labour projections

The engineering pipeline (**Figure 19**) is projected to average approximately $27b over the seven-year horizon. In contrast to last year's projected peak of $27b in 2026-27, the engineering pipeline is now expected to grow more steadily, rising from around $20b in the current financial year to a peak of approximately $32b in 2030-31. Following this peak, activity is projected to moderate to around $27b in 2031-32, as Games projects near completion.

Electricity, transport, mining and heavy industry remain the dominant drivers of engineering activity, together accounting for around 81% of the seven-year average engineering pipeline.

Transport infrastructure continues to attract significant investment in Queensland, reflecting its central role in Queensland's economic growth and long-term development objectives. The Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP) 2025-26 to 2028-29 commits $41.7b to roads, rail, maritime, public transport, and active transport projects. This program reflects sustained investment in connectivity and network efficiency, while also preparing transport systems for the 2032 Games and accommodating rising demand from population growth and economic expansion.

Electricity-related construction also remains a major driver of the engineering pipeline, with investment driven by the state's five-year Energy Roadmap released in October 2025. This reflects continued expansion across the energy sector, particularly in electricity generation, transmission, and storage infrastructure.

Mining and heavy industry construction is another significant driver, reflecting the strength of the state's resources sector and continued investment in large-scale projects.

Most of the electricity and mining projects are located in regional Queensland, where thinner labour markets and existing skills shortages heighten workforce pressures.

Delivering this expanding engineering pipeline will require a substantial increase in the number of construction workers (**Figure 20**). Projected average labour demand ranges between 30,000 and 46,000 over the seven years, rising from approximately 30,000 workers in 2025-26 and peaking at 46,000 in 2030-31.

In the current financial year, transport projects account for the largest share of average labour demand (37%), followed by electricity (33%) and mining and heavy industry projects (17%). In later years, electricity projects consistently dominate average labour demand, with transport projects second. Mining and heavy industry remains the third largest except in 2030-31, when the 2032 Games-related engineering works emerge as the third-largest driver, accounting for around 15% of projected average labour demand in that year.

Figure 19: ENGINEERING PIPELINE BY SUB-SECTOR, QLD

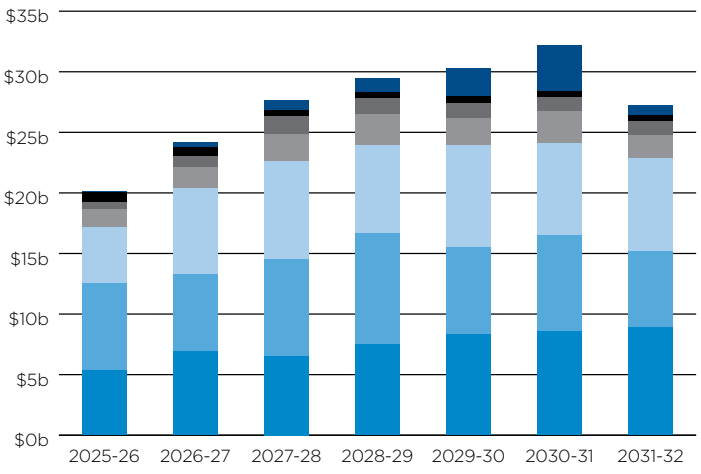
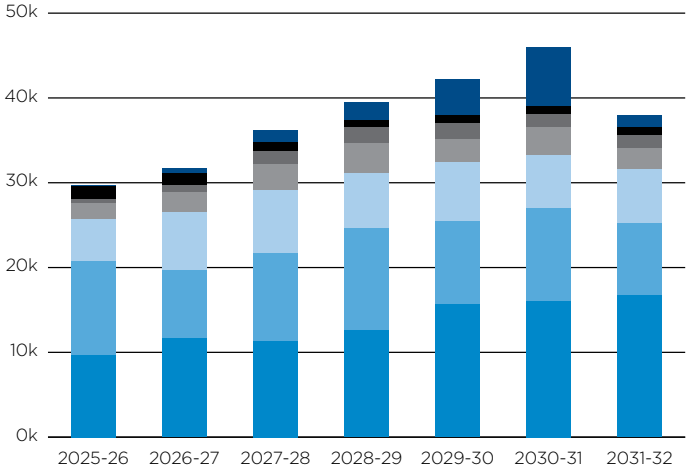


Figure 20: AVERAGE LABOUR DEMAND, ENGINEERING PIPELINE, QLD



Electricity **Transport** **Mining & heavy industry**
Water & sewerage **Other** **Defence** **2032 Games**

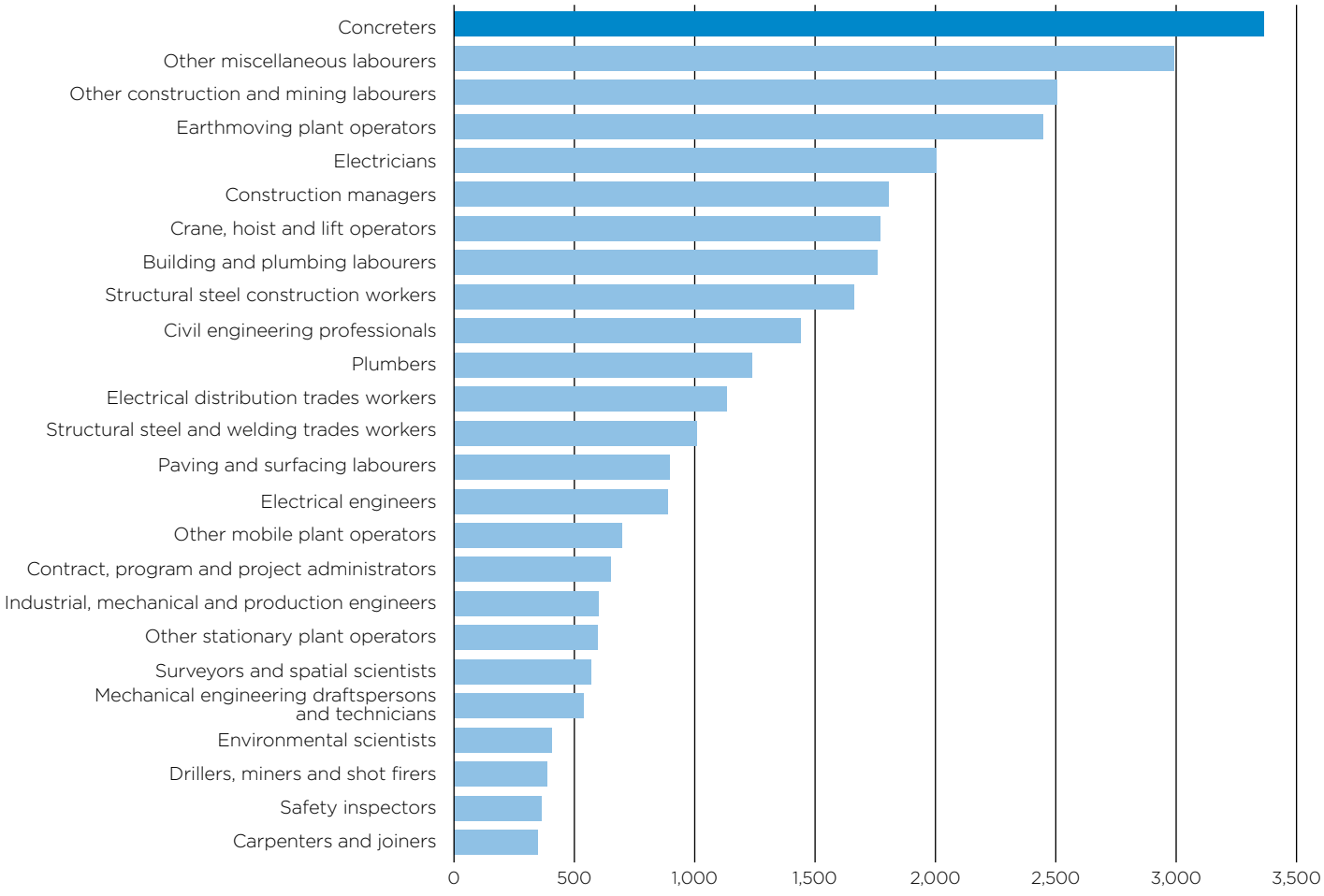
Source: CSQ

Engineering sector

Key occupations in demand

The construction workforce required to deliver the engineering pipeline is spread across a broad range of occupations (**Figure 21**)[21]. Construction roles projected to be in highest demand (on average) over the forecast horizon include a mix of trades, technical and support roles. Some of these include concreters, other miscellaneous, construction and mining labourers, earthmoving and other plant operators, electricians, construction managers, structural steel construction workers and civil engineering professionals.

Figure 21: KEY CONSTRUCTION OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND (7 YEAR AVERAGE) - ENGINEERING, QLD



Source: CSQ

[21] Figure 21 shows the top 25 occupations in demand, out of the 64 occupations included in this analysis for the engineering sector.

Snapshot 1: Average activity and labour forecast

Queensland's construction pipeline is forecast to average approximately $69b over the seven-year period (**Figure A**), $7b higher than the average projected for the same period[22] in the previous edition of Horizon 2032. Building activity dominates, accounting for 61% ($42b)[23] of the average pipeline, while engineering comprises the remaining 39% ($27b)[24].

Within building, residential activity drives the sector, making up 62% of the average pipeline (**Figure C**). Meanwhile, transport, electricity, mining and heavy industry collectively form the core of the engineering sector, making up 81% of its average pipeline (**Figure D**).

To deliver the projected pipeline, on average, approximately 138,000 construction workers will be needed, with 72% (approximately 100,000) for the building sector, and 28% (about 38,000) for engineering (**Figure B**).

Figure A:
AVERAGE (2025-26 TO 2031-32)
CONSTRUCTION PIPELINE BY SECTOR

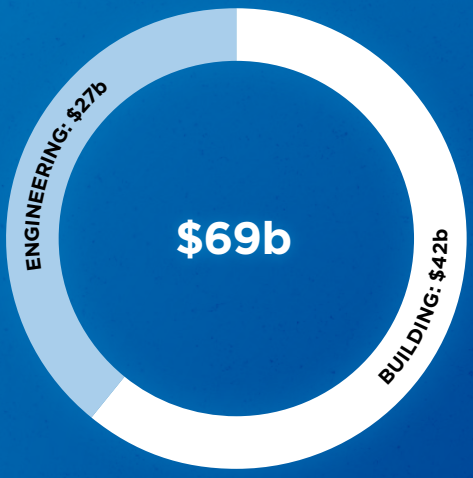


Figure B:
AVERAGE (2025-26 TO 2031-32)
LABOUR DEMAND BY SECTOR

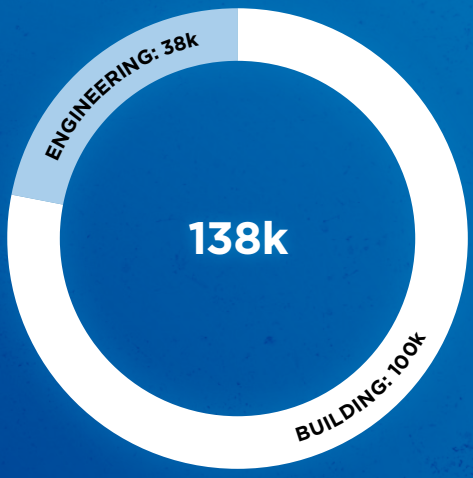


Figure C:
BREAKDOWN OF AVERAGE (2025-26 TO 2031-32)
BUILDING PIPELINE BY SUB-SECTOR

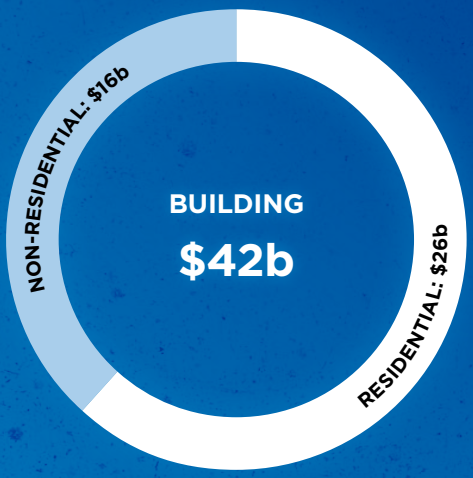
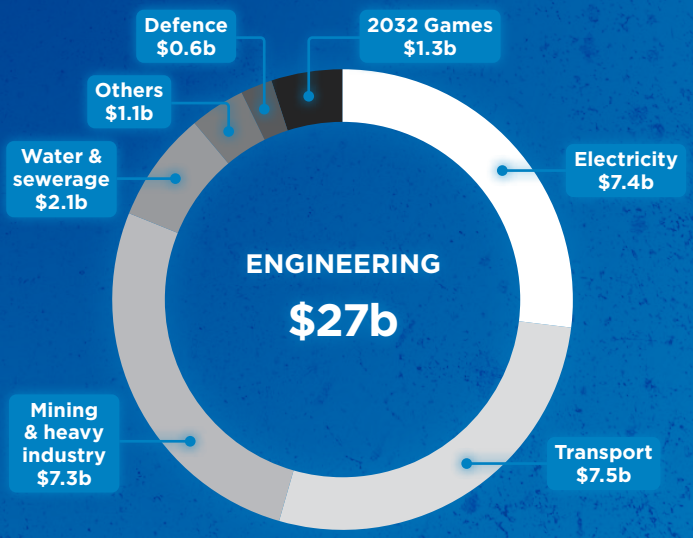


Figure D:
BREAKDOWN OF AVERAGE (2025-26 TO 2031-32)
ENGINEERING PIPELINE BY SUB-SECTOR



Source: CSQ

[22] The forecasts in the 2025 Horizon Report covered an 8-year forecast period (2024-25–2031-32). As the updated forecast now covers only 7 years (2025-26–2031-32), the average over the same 7-year period (2025-26–2031-32) from the previous report are used for any comparisons between the two reports to allow for a true like-for-like comparison and avoid differences driven purely by the change in horizon. The original 8-year average forecast from previous report are included in footnotes for reference.

[23] Modestly up by about $1.7b from the previous forecast, or $2.2b higher when compared to the previous 8-year average forecast.

[24] Up by $5.3b from the previous forecast, or $6.2b more than the previous 8-year average forecast.

Snapshot 2: The 2032 Games - Construction workforce estimates for venues and villages projects

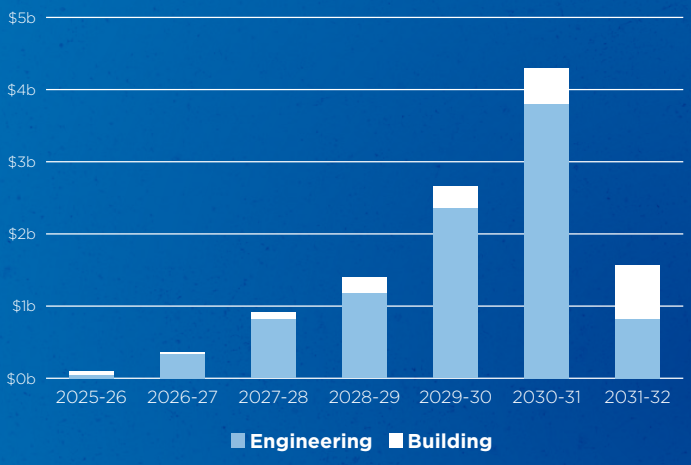
With only six years remaining until the 2032 Games, the timely delivery of the necessary infrastructure has become a central priority for the state. After a comprehensive 100-day review of Games infrastructure requirements, the Queensland Government released an updated delivery plan in March 2025. This plan sets out the full suite of proposed venues, athlete villages, and supporting facilities, along with other critical infrastructure needed to host the event.

Projects within the program are currently at varying stages of development, ranging from early planning and design to procurement and initial construction. Program-level momentum has increased, alongside clearer articulation of governance arrangements, delivery pathways, and sequencing.

The state has around $11.2b in construction work to be delivered for the 2032 Games venues and villages projects between now and 2031-32. Around $9.3b (83%) of this pipeline is engineering sector projects, with the remaining $1.9b (17%) in building[25].

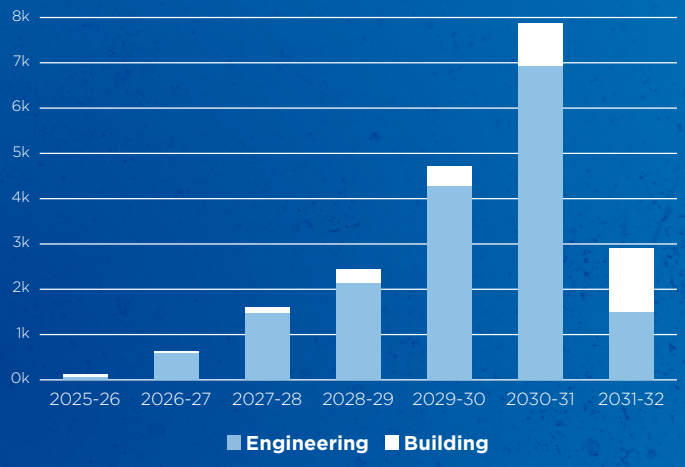
Consistent with the distribution of the pipeline (**Figure A**), average labour requirements vary across the forecast period (**Figure B**). Labour demand begins at modest levels, reflecting early design and planning work, and increases steadily as projects progress into the construction phase. After requiring approximately 750 construction workers on average across the first three financial years, demand is projected to increase to around 5,000 workers on average between 2028-29 to 2030-31. At the height of delivery in 2030-31, average labour demand is projected to reach nearly 8,000 construction workers, driven largely by engineering projects, which reach their highest demand in that year. Peak labour requirements for building projects are expected a year later, in 2031-32.

Figure A:
AVERAGE (2025-26 TO 2031-32)
CONSTRUCTION PIPELINE BY SECTOR



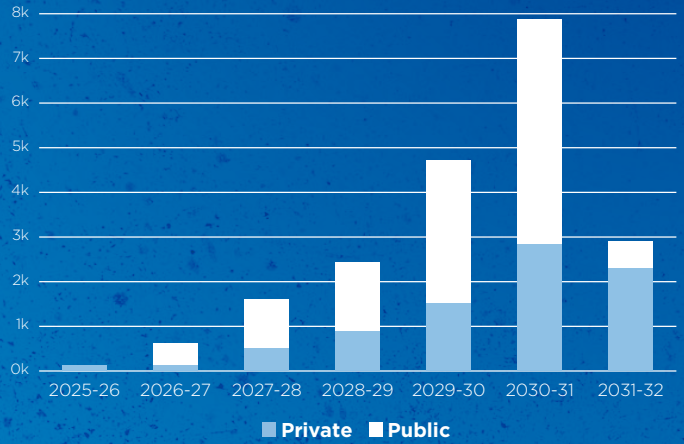
Source: CSQ

Figure B:
AVERAGE (2025-26 TO 2031-32)
LABOUR DEMAND BY SECTOR



Source: CSQ

Figure C:
AVERAGE (2025-26 TO 2031-32)
LABOUR DEMAND BY FUNDING SOURCE



Source: CSQ

Public investment dominates the pipeline, accounting for 64% of total activity, with the remaining 36% funded by the private sector. Publicly funded projects account for most of the average labour requirements up to 2030-31 (**Figure C**). In 2031-32, privately-funded Brisbane Athletes Village and the Brisbane Arena drive the shift in labour demand. Labour requirements for both portfolios are projected to peak simultaneously in 2030-31.

[25] See footnote 20.

Snapshot 2: The 2032 Games - Construction workforce estimates for venues and villages projects

Most of the work in the Games pipeline is concentrated in South East Queensland, with Brisbane holding the largest share at around 68% (**Figure D**). The city will host nine projects in total, including several major developments such as the Brisbane Stadium and the Victoria Park precinct. The Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast hold similar portions of the pipeline, representing 14.7% and 14.0% respectively, with each region set to deliver three projects .

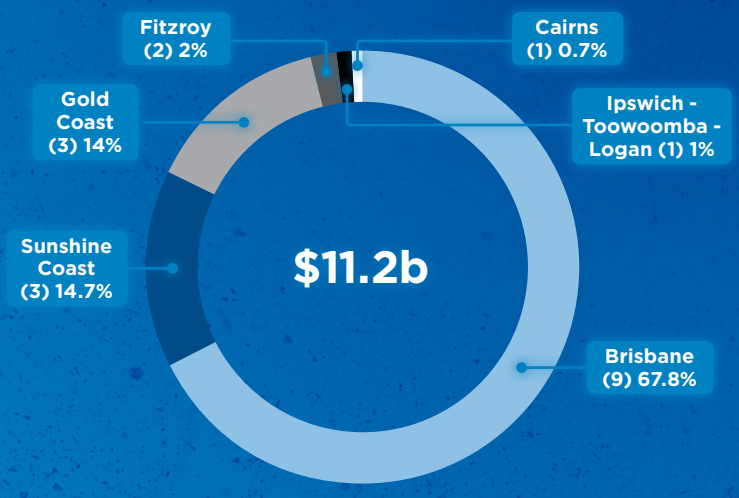
With the majority of Games venues and infrastructure located in SEQ, the region serves as the primary centre of construction labour demand for the 2032 Games. Workforce requirements across Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast, and the Gold Coast are projected to reach their peak concurrently in 2030-31 (**Figure E**).

Brisbane remains the dominant source of labour demand throughout the delivery period. Average workforce requirements are expected to exceed 1,000 workers from 2027-28 and rise to a peak of around 5,000 in 2030-31.

The Sunshine Coast records the next-highest demand, with average labour needs increasing from approximately 150 workers in 2026-27 to a peak of about 1,600 in 2030-31.

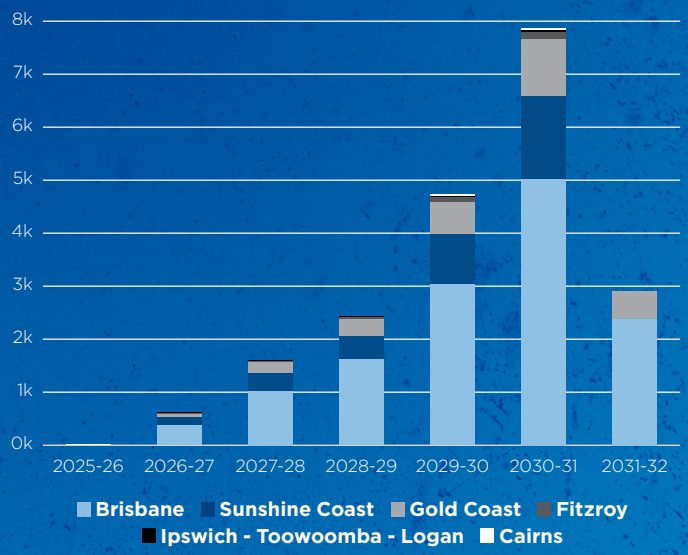
The Gold Coast shows a similar upward trajectory, with average labour requirements growing from around 70 workers in 2026-27 to a peak of roughly 1,100 in 2030-31.

Figure D:
DISTRIBUTION OF THE VALUE OF THE PIPELINE (%) AND NUMBER OF PROJECTS (19), BY REGION



Source: CSQ

Figure E:
AVERAGE LABOUR DEMAND BY REGION AND FINANCIAL YEAR

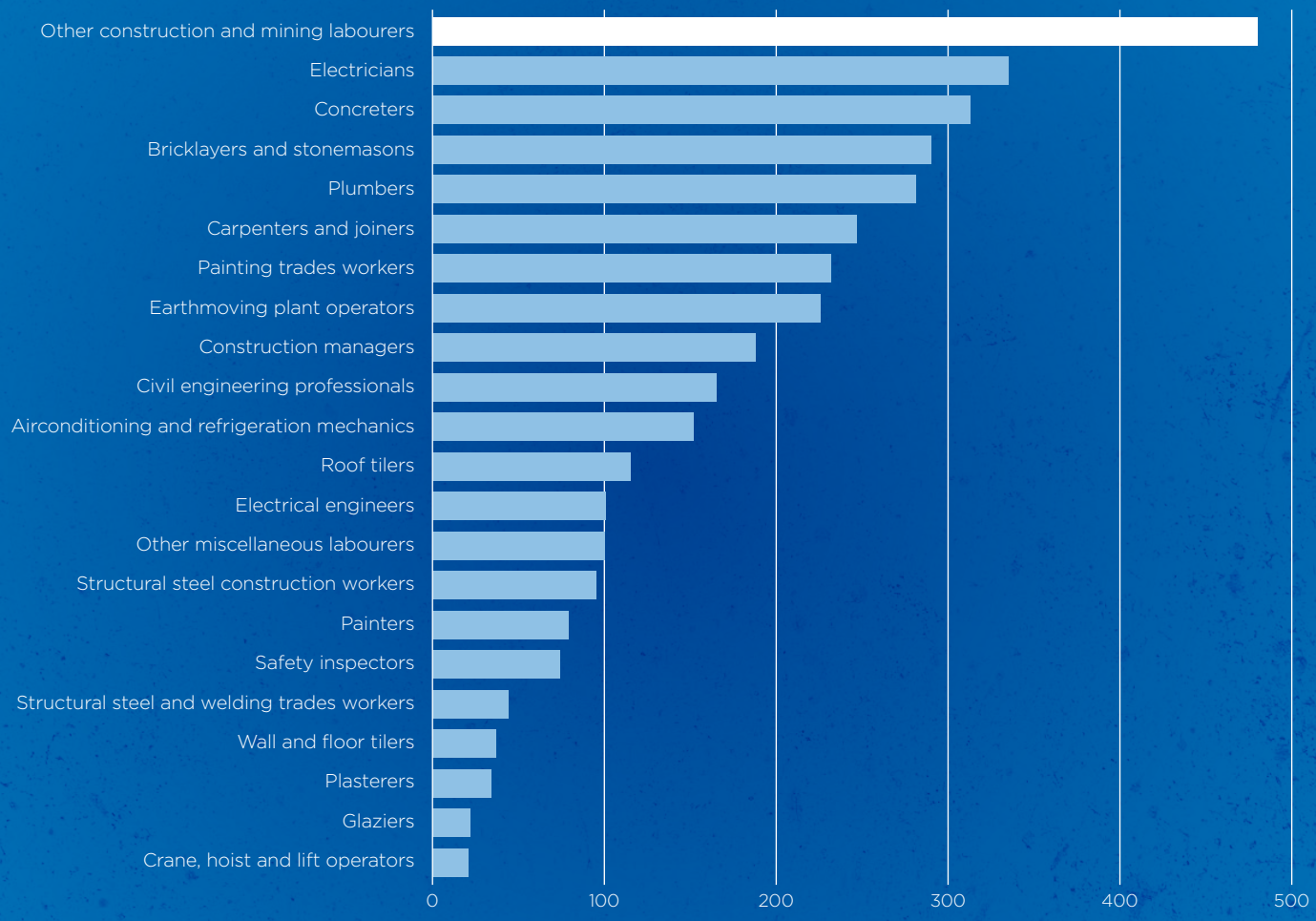


Source: CSQ

Snapshot 2: The 2032 Games - Construction workforce estimates for venues and villages projects

The construction pipeline is expected to drive substantial demand across a wide range of occupations (**Figure F**). Some of the key roles projected to see high demand include construction and mining labourers, electricians, concreters, bricklayers and stonemasons, plumbers, carpenters and joiners, painting trades workers, and earthmoving plant operators.

Figure F: KEY OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND, THE 2032 GAMES PIPELINE (7 YEAR AVERAGE), QLD



Source: CSQ

The workforce challenges

Queensland has a substantial construction pipeline to deliver over the seven years to 2031-32. More than a schedule of projects, it represents a major driver of statewide transformation, supporting economic momentum, population-driven infrastructure demand, and long-term development goals. For industry, the pipeline presents a clear opportunity to expand capacity, strengthen capability, and build a more resilient and skilled workforce.

However, these opportunities are accompanied by significant delivery challenges. Tight labour market conditions remain a primary constraint.

Over the forecast period, Queensland's expanding construction pipeline will require access to a materially larger workforce. Average construction labour demand is projected to increase from approximately 126,600 workers in the current financial year to a peak of around 148,300 in 2027-28, reflecting a 17% increase.

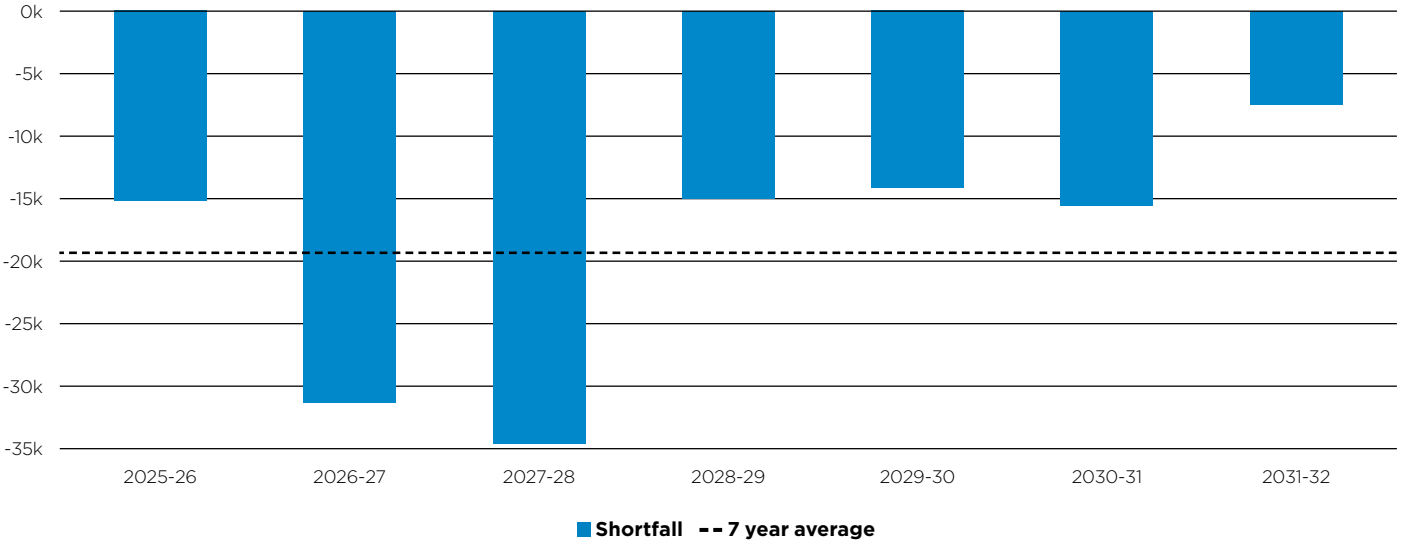
Against this backdrop of strong pipeline growth, and if current industry capacity trends continue, an average labour shortfall[26] of around 19,100 workers is projected across the seven years (**Figure 22**).

More acute workforce pressures are expected in the medium term, with the shortfall widening from approximately 15,000 in 2025-26 to as high as 35,000 by 2027-28, as activity accelerates.

The peak shortfall has now shifted out by a year and is less pronounced than the projected peak of 50,000 in the previous Horizon report, when both the building and engineering pipelines were expected to peak concurrently in 2026-27. The building pipeline now peaks in 2027-28, while engineering peaks much later in 2030-31. This further spreading of activity eases peak pressure, however, forecasted shortfalls in the latter years of the seven-year period have now increased compared to the previous report.

Addressing future construction workforce demand is critical to delivering the pipeline and sustaining industry growth. Without targeted interventions, persistent workforce pressures will drive project delays, increase costs, and impose long-term constraints on industry capacity.

Figure 22: AVERAGE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE SHORTFALL, QLD



Source: CSQ

[26] To estimate the shortfall, the industry's capacity to complete work is modelled using historic work done and projected over the 7-year horizon. This assumes that industry capacity will continue along current trends, so the forecast work done represents expected capacity if no additional measures are taken to increase labour supply. The value gap between projected work done and the construction pipeline, and insights into labour demand per dollar spent are used to translate this value gap into projected labour shortfall. The approach does not model labour supply directly.

Conclusion

Queensland is facing a period of robust construction activity, with strong demand across both building and engineering sectors. The state's construction pipeline is projected to increase from $60b in the current financial year to a peak of $75b by 2027-28, pushing average construction labour demand from 126,600 to around 148,300 over this period. Amid persistent tight labour market conditions, the workforce shortfall is projected to peak at 35,000 in 2027-28, with an average shortfall of around 19,100 across the seven-year period.

Securing a sufficient future construction workforce is essential. The robust pipeline highlights both opportunities and challenges for the construction industry. While offering scope for growth, innovation, and skills development, it also highlights the critical need to build workforce capacity to deliver on these opportunities.

Labour remains the most critical delivery risk. Construction is among several sectors experiencing elevated labour pressures nationally, with persistent shortages across a broad range of occupations. These shortages are particularly acute in trades, technician roles, and technical specialist positions, reflecting structural challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers. These pressures are mirrored in Queensland, with strong demand projected for trade, technical specialist, and professional occupations.

Queensland's workforce challenges are further intensified by time-bound Games projects and the concurrent delivery of multiple major programs, including energy transition initiatives, health facility expansions, critical infrastructure works, and housing developments. The simultaneous delivery of work across multiple sectors, in both regional and metropolitan areas, is intensifying competition for workers from a limited construction talent pool. Regional projects, in particular, face pronounced constraints due to long-standing challenges in attracting and retaining skilled labour.

With Queensland now in a sustained period of construction activity, proactive workforce planning and targeted capacity-building measures will be key to maintaining industry resilience and ensuring the timely delivery of projects. Building a sustainable construction workforce depends on strong local skilling initiatives that attract new entrants and promote workforce diversity. Early action is essential, as training, skilling, and integrating new entrants into the workforce take time.

Expanding and strengthening apprenticeship pathways is central to building a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers, particularly for occupations that currently lack formal entry routes. Supporting participants to complete qualifications and progress into fully-skilled roles, while also retaining the existing and future workforce, will be critical to sustaining long-term delivery capacity.

Increasing diversity within the construction workforce is also essential. Female participation remains low relative to the broader labour force, representing a potential untapped source of talent. Targeted initiatives to attract and retain women, including through recruitment, retention, and supportive workplace practices, will help broaden the construction labour base and strengthen industry resilience. The pipeline also offers opportunities to boost participation among Indigenous Australians and other underrepresented groups, particularly in regional areas. With much of Queensland's large-scale electricity, mining and heavy industry investments occurring in regional Queensland, expanding the regional workforce is critical.

Traditional labour supply channels, including sector shifts and new entrants from existing labour pools, are limited in many regional and remote communities. There may be scope to better utilise skilled migration as a supporting lever to increase the construction workforce. Migrants are currently under-represented in Queensland's construction workforce, with many under-employed, and typically 100 or fewer construction trades migrants enter permanently each year through key state-nominated visa pathways[27]. A broader, long-term approach to resolving labour shortages is essential, however migration may provide short-term relief for some construction occupations and longer-term support for others.

Labour constraints are likely to persist and will take time and coordinated effort to resolve. A comprehensive workforce and skills development plan that focuses on attraction, retention, diversity, and capability building will be essential to ensure the state can meet its ambitious infrastructure agenda and deliver on its multiple economic and social objectives. Meeting this challenge will require a whole-of-system response, with coordinated efforts from government, industry, education and training sectors, and local communities.

[27] Queensland Productivity Commission (2026), Opportunities to improve productivity of the construction industry Final Report, p.358, Queensland Government, Brisbane.