

THE STATE OF THE QUEENSLAND CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE

What's driving demand, why supply can't keep pace, and what it means for anyone planning a program of work over the next three years.

\$77B

QLD CONSTRUCTION
PIPELINE, 2026-27

300K

NATIONAL WORKFORCE
SHORTFALL BY
MID-2027

6%

QLD LICENSEES UNDER
AGE 30

THREE STORIES, ONE PROBLEM

Australia's construction industry is entering a period where demand, workforce ageing, and compliance enforcement are converging at the same time. This report brings together the current data on each, and what it means for builders, contractors, and the people doing the work.

THE HEADLINE NUMBERS

\$53B → \$77B

Queensland's construction pipeline, 2024–25 to 2026–27

156,000

Peak construction worker demand in that window

18,200

Average annual QLD workforce shortfall, next eight years

67,000+

Queensland's projected worker deficit by 2027

~141K → ~300K

National construction workforce shortfall, today vs mid-2027

126,000

National shortfall in trades and labouring roles specifically, by mid-2027

The short version: demand isn't the constraint anymore. Queensland and national pipelines are large and growing, driven by housing, the energy transition, defence-linked construction, and (in Queensland) 2032 Olympics infrastructure. The constraint is supply — and supply is ageing out faster than it's being replaced.

WHO THIS REPORT IS FOR

Clients & project owners

Proof of supply reliability and compliance assurance — the ability to crew a job in a tight market is the actual product being sourced right now.

Contractors & candidates

A shortage this size is a candidate's market. Understanding where demand is heading helps with ticket investment, regional decisions, and career timing.

THE DEMAND STORY

Queensland's construction pipeline is running at roughly **\$53 billion** for 2024–25, forecast to reach **\$77 billion** by 2026–27. Peak worker demand across that window sits around **156,000** — against a workforce that, as Section Two shows, can't keep pace.

THREE DEMAND WAVES, STACKING TOGETHER

DEFENCE

AUKUS-linked defence construction is ramping up, drawing on the same construction workforce as every other program of work in the state.

ENERGY

The energy transition — transmission lines, renewables build-out, grid upgrades — is a construction program in its own right, running in parallel to everything else.

HOUSING

Housing and social/affordable housing targets are climbing at the same time, drawing on the same trades and machinery operators as defence and energy work.

Stacked together, these three waves aren't taking turns — they're overlapping, drawing on the same finite pool of licensed, ticketed, experienced people at the same time. Nationally, that adds up to a **\$242 billion public infrastructure pipeline through FY2025–2029**, with **521,000 workers** projected to be in demand by 2027.

\$77B

QUEENSLAND CONSTRUCTION PIPELINE FORECAST, 2026–27

WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

For project teams, this changes the planning conversation — from "who can we hire" to "who can we lock in early, and how do we make sure that supply is reliable when the pipeline peaks." Engaging labour hire relationships ahead of a demand peak, rather than at the point of need, is increasingly the difference between hitting a program timeline and watching it slip.

THE SUPPLY STORY

Ask most people the average age of a construction worker in Queensland and they'll guess somewhere in their 30s. The real number is nearly **49** — and in some trades, it's worse.

METRIC	FIGURE
Average age, all QBCC licensees (122,000+)	~49 years
Average age, Builder–Open licence holders	~54 years
Average age, Joinery licence holders	~53 years
Share of QLD licensees under age 30	6%

Only 6%. That's not a pipeline problem for 2040 — it's a workforce ageing out faster than it's coming in, right now, while construction demand climbs. This is a structural, multi-year problem, not something a single hiring push fixes.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

The gap isn't isolated to Queensland or to one trade. Infrastructure Australia's 2025 Market Capacity Report (published April 2026) projects the national construction workforce shortfall roughly doubling in just over a year:

~141,000 National shortfall, today	~300,000 Projected national shortfall, mid-2027
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Of that projected national gap, **126,000** is specifically trades and labouring roles — the segment labour hire providers serve most directly. For clients, this reinforces workforce retention as much as new recruitment. For workers considering a trade, it means genuine long-term demand and career security are baked into the numbers, not marketing language.

THE COMPLIANCE STORY

Enforcement under the Labour Hire Licensing Act 2017 is visible and getting more so. A prosecution out of **Chinchilla (March 2026)** and fines exceeding **\$240,000 in Mount Isa (late 2025)** both signal that regulators are actively pursuing labour hire non-compliance.

For clients, "is this provider licensed and audited" is becoming a genuine commercial risk question, not a box-tick — and a direct trust/differentiation lever for a compliant provider. See our companion **Host Business Compliance Checklist** for the specific items worth verifying before you sign.

READING THE THREE STORIES TOGETHER

Demand is climbing across three overlapping waves. Supply is ageing out of the industry faster than it's being replaced. Enforcement is making compliance a live commercial issue rather than paperwork. Individually, each is a talking point. Together, they're the actual shape of the market anyone in Queensland construction is operating in right now — and the reason why relationships and reliable supply, not just headcount, are the differentiator that matters.

"It's not the work that's hard to find anymore. It's the crew."

ABOUT BROADER WORKFORCE

Broader Workforce is a national labour hire provider operating across civil infrastructure, mining, defence, and energy/utilities — earthworks, plant operation, general labour, and skilled trades. We work inside this market every day, on both sides: sourcing the people, and talking to the businesses trying to plan around them.

Planning a program of work, or weighing up your next move as a tradesperson or operator? Get in touch — broaderworkforce.com.au

Sources: Master Builders Queensland; Queensland Building and Construction Commission (QBCC); Construction Skills Queensland, Horizon 2032 Report; Infrastructure Australia, 2025 Market Capacity Report (published April 2026); Labour Hire Licensing Queensland / Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit. This report is general information for planning purposes and is not legal, financial, or professional advice.