

Re: Submission to Jobs and Skills Australia's consultation process on the Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL) and the inclusion of Sports Turf Management as a Critical Occupation

Attn: Jobs and Skills Australia,

We are writing to express our support for the submission presented by the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association, in advocating for the inclusion of Sports Turf Management as a critical occupation for inclusion in the consultation process on the Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL). Sports Turf Management, classified under ANZSCO code 3623, plays a pivotal role in maintaining the quality and safety of sporting facilities and playing surfaces for sport and recreation activities across Australia. However, recent trends in the labour market highlight a concerning shortfall in skilled and qualified local turf managers, necessitating urgent attention and action.

As the industry Association (ASTMA) noted in its submission: According to the latest labour market data and analysis, there has been a noticeable shortage of skilled professionals in the field of Sports Turf Management. This shortage is evidenced by:

- **Vacancy Rates:** The vacancy rates for positions in Sports Turf Management have been consistently high across numerous regions in Australia, indicating a significant demand for skilled professionals.
- **Job Advertisements:** A sustained surge in job advertisements over the past 18 months seeking qualified turf managers reflects the growing need for expertise in this field. This includes a record level of advertisements placed on national websites with Industry bodies (Australian Sports Turf Managers Association – www.astma.com.au/services/jobs-classifieds/positions-vacant/ where advertisements have increased by over 15% each year for the last 3 years, and national Careers websites such as Seek (www.seek.com.au)

However, many of these positions remain unfilled due to a lack of suitable candidates.

- **Industry Growth:** The sports industry in Australia continues to expand, with significant numbers of new facilities and infrastructure projects underway. This growth further amplifies the demand for skilled turf managers to ensure the maintenance and upkeep of these assets.

In addition to quantitative indicators, qualitative data underscores the critical nature of Sports Turf Management as an occupation:

- **Safety and Quality Standards:** Maintaining sports turf to high safety and quality standards is crucial for the well-being of athletes and the integrity of sporting events. Skilled turf managers are essential in ensuring that playing surfaces meet these standards consistently.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Turf management practices are increasingly scrutinized for their environmental impact. Qualified professionals can implement sustainable techniques that minimize water usage, chemical inputs, and carbon footprint, aligning with broader environmental goals.

Looking ahead, the future of Sports Turf Management in Australia presents further challenges, each of which must be factored into the approach relating to Core Skills Occupations List:

- Ageing Workforce: A significant portion of the existing turf management workforce is nearing retirement age, leading to a potential depletion of skilled professionals in the near and medium-term future.
- Technological Advancements: Emerging technologies such as precision agriculture, remote sensing, and data analytics are transforming turf management practices. However, the adoption of these technologies requires a workforce with specialised skills and knowledge.

The Importance of Sports Turf Management to Golf

Golf Australia, the peak governing body for golf in Australia, are acutely aware of the current challenges faced by Sports Turf Managers (termed Superintendents in the golf industry) and their clubs, facilities and places to play with regards to attraction and retention of these industry professionals. In a Staff Attraction & Retention session led by Golf Australia at the 2023 ASTMA Conference, Superintendents voiced and echoed the existing challenges faced, including the high number of role vacancies and not having enough qualified Sports Turf Managers and Apprentices to fill these roles and service current workloads.

At present to fill existing workforce gaps, many clubs and facilities rely on seasonal workers from the Northern Hemisphere who travel to Australia to expand their experience in the industry. These proposed changes to the CSOL will remove this opportunity for hundreds of international Superintendents to gain valuable, career strengthening experience, and place a further strain on workloads of the current workforce.

There are over 27,800 full time equivalent roles in golf, equating to a headcount of over 38,000 paid workers across the country every year. At green-grass golfing clubs and facilities, Superintendents play a critical role of overall maintenance and management of the golf course with a priority of ensuring the course in a condition to provide a great golfing experience for participants.

Golf in Australia is booming, with 3.5 million Australians playing golf in all its forms over the last 12 months. The number of competition rounds alone grew by 15.9% in 2023 to 12,227,604 rounds. Competition rounds played by golfers 18 years and under jumped a massive 39% in 12 months. Of the 1,603 clubs, facilities and places to play across Australia, 1,463 are green-grass golf courses, with 111 of these being public, council owned facilities.

With participation continuing to soar, we need to have an increase in our workforce numbers to sustain this growth. We believe that it has been underestimated how much of an impact the role of Sports Turf Managers play in supporting participation growth in golf. Without an adequate number of Superintendents maintaining and managing golf courses, there could be a decline in the upkeep but also in the number of green-grass golfing facilities available to golfers. The work of Sports Turf Managers in golf directly impacts the ability for people to continue participating and playing the sport in our country.

Here are just some stories which shine light on how pivotal these professionals are to our sport:

- [#ThankASuper Day: Carbrook's colossal recovery effort](#)
- [#ThankASuper Day: Rosebud's renaissance](#)
- [#ThankASuper Day: Geraldine O'Callaghan at Sandy Links](#)
- [#ThankASuper Day: Jayden Zappelli at Kalgoorlie Golf Course](#)
- [Age no barrier for Launceston superintendent](#)

In conclusion, the inclusion of Sports Turf Management as a critical occupation in the Core Skills Occupations List is imperative to address the current and future labour market challenges in this industry. By prioritising an effective combination of training, recruitment and skilled migration initiatives for turf management professionals, we can ensure the continued growth and sustainability of Australia's sports industry.

We appreciate your consideration of this submission and that of the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association, and stand ready to provide any further information or assistance required.

Sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

[Redacted title]

Golf Australia

[Redacted contact information]

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

[Redacted title]

Golf Australia

[Redacted contact information]