

31<sup>st</sup> May 2024

Attn: Jobs and Skills Australia

**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**

The Sports Turf Association, NSW Inc (STA NSW) is the industry body for people working or involved in sports turf management within New South Wales.

We are writing to express our support for the submission presented by the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA), 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 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/](http://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.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.

STA NSW has seen a significant change in attraction of skilled staff across the industry at all levels of employment over the past several years. Many members report the struggles they experience filling vacancies and the impact that puts on the existing teams working to complete the work required and ensure that sportsfields are professionally maintained and are safe for all users. This current shortage is likely to remain a critical challenge in the years ahead.

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 are happy to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely



Sports Turf Association, NSW