
RRC Consultation Package - Version 2

Registered Residential Carpenter pathway - Victoria

A practical reform proposal supported by real renovation evidence, housing supply alignment, and consumer protection safeguards.

Consultation Draft

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Purpose of this package

This Version 2 consultation package strengthens the Registered Residential Carpenter (RRC) proposal by adding real renovation evidence from the Yarra Valley, the housing supply alignment argument, and a clearer consumer protection framework.

The RRC pathway is not a backdoor builder licence. It is a controlled renovation-focused pathway designed to improve clarity, consumer protection, and accountability in common small-to-medium renovation work.

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Executive Summary

Victoria is under pressure to increase housing supply, improve building system confidence, and strengthen consumer protection. At the same time, many residential renovation projects sit in a practical grey area between ordinary trade work and full domestic builder responsibility.

The proposed Registered Residential Carpenter pathway would create a controlled, consumer-facing registration category for highly experienced renovation carpenters undertaking defined small-to-medium residential renovation work.

- It would not replace registered domestic builders.
- It would operate within clear scope limits, exclusions, insurance obligations and handoff triggers.
- It would help homeowners understand who they are hiring, what that person can do, and when builder involvement is required.
- It would recognise the real site responsibility experienced carpenters already carry when hidden renovation conditions are exposed.

Victoria does not only need more building activity. Victoria needs smarter allocation of existing building capacity.

Why this matters now

Renovation work rarely unfolds exactly as quoted. Door frames, wet areas, floors, wall cavities and old service zones often conceal deterioration that cannot be fully seen until demolition or removal begins.

This matters because the homeowner has already engaged someone, the house may be opened up, and practical safety decisions must be made immediately. The current system does not clearly explain how experienced renovation carpenters should be recognised or regulated when a limited job expands because hidden defects are discovered.

The policy problem

- Homeowners struggle to understand when carpentry work becomes domestic building work.
- Good operators face grey areas around scope, variation, insurance and handoff.
- Registered builders can be pulled into smaller renovation matters where the system may be better served by a controlled middle pathway.
- Hidden conditions can push a job over \$10,000 even when the original scope appeared limited.

Department response and review opportunity

The Department of Transport and Planning has acknowledged the Registered Residential Carpenter proposal under reference CMIN-1-26-2293, dated 5 May 2026. The department noted that the Building Regulations are due to sunset in 2028 and that public consultation opportunities are expected through the review, Regulatory Impact Statement and proposed regulations process.

This creates a practical policy window. The RRC proposal should be positioned early as a structured reform option for consideration during the Building Regulations sunset review and broader domestic building reform discussion.

The proposal should be advanced as better regulation - not deregulation. The objective is clearer responsibility, safer consumer outcomes, and better alignment between renovation reality and the regulatory framework.

The \$10,000 threshold problem

In modern renovation work, \$10,000 is no longer a reliable dividing line between minor work and meaningful building responsibility. A job can begin below that value and exceed it quickly once hidden defects are exposed.

The threshold problem is not only about money. It is about the moment a simple-looking job becomes a broader repair, rectification or coordination task after the house is opened up.

- A door/window job can expose rot into subfloor and structural timbers.
- A bathroom job can reveal damaged substrates, bad wiring, and wet-area decay.
- A flooring job can reveal termite damage across multiple rooms.
- The homeowner may not understand how responsibility, variations and insurance should change as scope expands.

Case Study 1 - Door and window replacement exposing hidden rot

Location: Healesville / Yarra Valley

Starting value: approx. \$8,000

Final value: approx. \$15,000

Project type: Door frame replacement, window sill repair, subfloor and structural timber rectification.

The project began as a contained door frame and window sill repair. Some rot was visible, but the full extent could not be assessed until the old frames and surrounding materials were removed.

Once opened up, rot had spread through parts of the floor and into structural timbers. The work had to shift from simple replacement into safety, weatherproofing, subfloor repair and coordination of follow-on trades.



Visible room works became a concealed subfloor issue once material was removed.



Floor sections were opened to expose the true condition of the subfloor and framing.

Policy lesson: a job that begins under the \$10,000 threshold can quickly exceed it because the real damage is hidden until the building is opened.

Case Study 1 - Consumer and regulatory issue

The homeowner knew there may be some water damage, but not to the extent discovered. Once the building was opened, the site could not simply be left unsafe or exposed. The practitioner had to assess damage, explain the scope increase, repair affected areas and restore safe, usable conditions.

- Consumer risk: unexpected cost increase from approx. \$8,000 to approx. \$15,000.
- Safety risk: damaged subfloor and structural timbers could not be covered over.
- Practical risk: large openings and affected areas had to be repaired quickly to protect the home.
- Regulatory risk: the project crossed from a simple-looking repair into broader renovation responsibility.



Rotten and failed timber removed from affected areas.



Subfloor/foam repair during rectification.

Case Study 2 - Bathroom / wet-area renovation revealing hidden damage

Location: Badger Creek 3777 / Yarra Valley

Starting value: approx. \$7,000

Final value: approx. \$12,000

Trades required: plasterer, painter and electrician

Additional complication: bad wiring discovered once opened.

The bathroom work exposed concealed deterioration behind finishes and around wet-area fixtures. The job expanded because the structure, wall surfaces and services had to be made suitable before the renovation could continue.



Bathroom/wet-area damage exposed after removal of fixtures and linings.



Concealed timber damage beside wet-area wall and shower zone.

Policy lesson: bathroom renovations regularly expose water damage, wiring, framing, plaster and finishing issues that push a trade job into a broader coordination problem.

Case Study 2 - Why the current system struggles

The homeowner may believe a bathroom renovation is a straightforward update. In practice, wet areas often reveal problems that cannot be seen before demolition: failed substrates, hidden water damage, unsafe wiring, damaged framing and old service issues.

- The work required trade coordination beyond carpentry alone.
- The value moved from approx. \$7,000 to approx. \$12,000.
- Bad wiring meant an electrician had to be brought in.
- Plastering and painting were required to make the area complete and usable.
- The homeowner needed clear explanation, written variations and accountability.



Rot and floor deterioration around wet-area plumbing.



Framing repair around exposed services and old wall construction.

Case Study 3 - Termite-damaged floors across multiple rooms

Location: Chum Creek 3777 / Yarra Valley

Project type: Termite-damaged floor and subfloor rectification across living room, hallway and bedrooms

Value: expanded after concealed termite damage was exposed.

This case involved termite damage affecting flooring in multiple parts of the home. As more areas were opened, more damage was found. The work could not be properly understood from the surface.

Termite damage creates a different type of renovation risk from water damage: it can spread across the house behind walls, under floors and through structural timber before the homeowner understands the full scale.



Flooring opened to inspect and repair termite-damaged areas.



A surface-level flooring issue became broader floor and subfloor rectification.

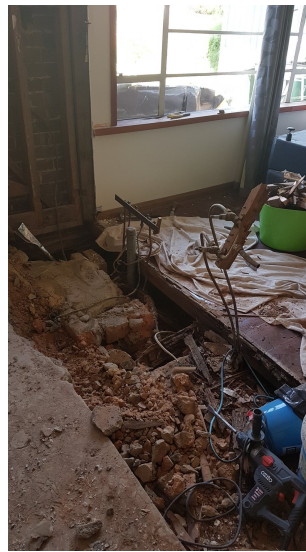
Case Study 3 - Hidden-condition escalation

The main problem in termite-related renovation work is that the visible defect is rarely the full defect. Once one area is opened, the practitioner often discovers additional damage in adjoining rooms, hallways, wall bases or subfloor zones.

- The scope can expand across living rooms, hallways and bedrooms.
- The homeowner may not know the true condition until flooring is removed.
- Work must be sequenced so the home remains safe to access.
- A carpenter must decide what can remain, what must be removed, and when other professional input is required.
- A clear handoff trigger is needed if damage exceeds the controlled RRC scope.



Termite-damaged flooring removed around access and threshold areas.



Concealed timber damage at wall base and floor junctions.

Proposed RRC pathway

A conservative two-tier pathway is recommended. The model should be renovation-focused, evidence-based and subject to clear caps, exclusions and oversight.

Tier	Purpose	Indicative requirements
Tier 1 - Registered Residential Carpenter	Defined small-to-medium renovation work within a capped project value.	Cert III Carpentry or equivalent; completed apprenticeship; 10+ years verified experience; renovation evidence; insurance; contract and compliance knowledge.
Tier 2 - Advanced Registered Residential Carpenter	Larger staged renovation work within stronger limits and oversight.	20+ years verified experience; stronger portfolio evidence; references; advanced assessment; higher insurance; stricter CPD and oversight.

The RRC pathway should only proceed if it strengthens consumer protection and protects builder responsibility.

Consumer protection safeguards

The RRC model must be built around consumer protection. It should not create informal or uncontrolled renovation authority. It should replace ambiguity with clear rules.

- Public registration and title protection.
- Mandatory insurance appropriate to project value and scope.
- Written contracts above a defined threshold.
- Mandatory written variation process when hidden defects are discovered.
- Plain-English disclosure of scope, exclusions and limits.
- Photo documentation of concealed damage.
- Clear handoff triggers to a registered builder, engineer, surveyor or specialist trade where required.
- Complaint, disciplinary and audit pathways.
- Ongoing professional development in contracts, consumer protection, permits and compliance.

Builder protection and exclusions

The proposal should be framed as a support to registered builders, not a replacement for them. Builders remain central to new homes, major structural works, complex projects and higher-risk construction.

Recommended exclusions

- No new home construction.
- No multi-dwelling or apartment developments.
- No projects above the approved tier cap.
- No major structural alterations requiring complex engineering responsibility unless builder/engineer/surveyor oversight applies.
- No representation as a domestic builder.
- No work outside demonstrated competency or insurance coverage.

The RRC pathway is designed to reduce unnecessary renovation pressure on builders while keeping builder responsibility protected where it properly belongs.

Housing supply alignment

The RRC pathway can be positioned as a housing-system efficiency reform. Registered builders are needed for new housing supply, larger domestic building projects and high-risk construction. A controlled RRC pathway could help absorb defined renovation demand without weakening consumer protection.

- Frees registered builder capacity for new homes and larger projects.
- Improves homeowner access to experienced renovation practitioners.
- Brings grey-area renovation work into clearer registration, insurance and contract rules.
- Recognises practical renovation capability while maintaining clear limits.

A controlled RRC pathway can support housing supply by allowing the right practitioner to do the right work under the right level of regulation.

Pilot program recommendation

A limited pilot program would reduce regulatory and political risk. It would allow government and regulators to test eligibility, scope, insurance, consumer complaints, builder response and practical implementation before wider rollout.

- 50 to 100 approved practitioners.
- 12 to 24 month trial period.
- Strict eligibility and evidence requirements.
- Defined project caps and exclusions.
- Mandatory insurance and written contracts.
- Reporting obligations and case tracking.
- Independent review before formal adoption.

Pilot success measures

- Low complaint rates.
- Clear consumer understanding.
- Appropriate builder handoff behaviour.
- Insurance practicality.
- Regulator manageability.
- Evidence that the pathway reduces grey-area renovation risk.

Consultation questions

- Should Victoria consider a separate registration pathway for experienced residential renovation carpenters?
- What types of renovation work should be included or excluded?
- What project-value caps would be appropriate?
- What insurance model would protect consumers without making the pathway unworkable?
- What written disclosure should consumers receive before work begins?
- When should mandatory builder handoff occur?
- Should the model begin as a limited pilot program?
- How should the pathway interact with the Building Regulations sunset review?

Closing statement

The evidence in this package shows that renovation work often changes once the home is opened up. Hidden rot, failed wet areas, termite damage, bad wiring, subfloor problems and service conflicts are common realities of residential renovation.

The proposed RRC pathway gives Victoria an opportunity to create a safer, clearer and more accountable middle pathway - one that respects registered builders, protects consumers and recognises experienced renovation carpenters working within defined limits.

The goal is simple: clearer rules, clearer roles and better renovation outcomes for Victorian homeowners.

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