



CARPENTERS FOR HOUSING REFORM VICTORIA

RRC Housing Supply Alignment Paper

How a Registered Residential Carpenter Pathway Can Support
Victoria's Housing Supply, Builder Capacity and Consumer
Protection Objectives

CONSULTATION DRAFT

Prepared by: Carpenters for Housing Reform Victoria

Status: Consultation Draft

Date: May 2026

Website: www.carpentryreform.com.au

Contact: admin@sonsiecarpentry.com

Clearer rules. Clearer roles. Better renovation outcomes.

PREPARED FOR STRUCTURED DISCUSSION

0. Document overview

This consultation draft positions the Registered Residential Carpenter pathway as a practical workforce-allocation reform that can support Victoria's housing supply objectives while strengthening clarity, accountability and consumer protection in residential renovation work.

Contents

- 1 Executive Summary
- 2 Purpose of This Paper
- 3 Current Reform Context
- 4 The Builder Capacity Problem
- 5 The Renovation Regulation Gap
- 6 The RRC Pathway as a Pressure-Release Valve
- 7 Proposed RRC Model
- 8 Clear Exclusions
- 9 Consumer Protection Framework
- 10 Builder Protection and Industry Balance
- 11 Implementation Through the Building and Plumbing Commission
- 12 Pilot Program Option
- 13 Risk Management
- 14 Strategic Benefits
- 15 Recommended Government Position
- 16 Closing Statement
- 17 Proposed Consultation Questions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Executive Summary

Victoria is under significant pressure to increase housing supply, improve building system performance and restore consumer confidence in residential construction. Current reform efforts are rightly focused on faster housing delivery, better regulation, stronger consumer protection and more efficient use of industry capacity.

This paper proposes that a new Registered Residential Carpenter (RRC) pathway could support these objectives by creating a controlled, renovation-focused registration category for highly experienced carpenters.

The RRC pathway would not replace registered domestic builders. It would operate as a clearly defined, insured and regulated middle pathway for small-to-medium residential renovation work. Its purpose would be to reduce unnecessary pressure on registered builders, improve homeowner access to capable renovation practitioners and bring more practical renovation work into a transparent regulatory framework.

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

Registered domestic builders should remain focused on new homes, major domestic building projects, complex structural works, multi-dwelling developments and higher-risk construction. Experienced renovation carpenters should have a legitimate, controlled pathway to undertake defined renovation work where their experience, training and practical capability are directly relevant.

- freeing registered builder capacity for new housing supply and larger projects;
- reducing regulatory ambiguity in small-to-medium renovation work;
- improving consumer protection through clearer registration, insurance and contract requirements;
- recognising experienced carpenters who already carry substantial practical responsibility on renovation sites;
- creating a safer and more accountable alternative to informal renovation arrangements;
- supporting housing quality by improving access to skilled renovation practitioners.

This paper recommends that the Victorian Government, relevant regulators and industry stakeholders consider a limited RRC pilot program or consultation process as part of broader building reform.

PURPOSE

2. Purpose of This Paper

The purpose of this paper is to position the Registered Residential Carpenter pathway within Victoria's broader housing, planning and building reform environment.

The paper does not argue for deregulation. It argues for better regulation.

It proposes that experienced carpenters undertaking defined residential renovation work should be brought more clearly into the formal system through a controlled registration model with:

- strict eligibility criteria;
- defined project limits;
- mandatory insurance;
- written contract obligations;
- clear exclusions;
- consumer protection safeguards;
- disciplinary oversight;
- ongoing professional development.

The intended outcome is a more efficient, safer and more practical residential renovation system that supports, rather than undermines, Victoria's building reform objectives.

CURRENT REFORM CONTEXT

3. Current Reform Context

Victoria is pursuing major housing and building system reforms. The state faces sustained population growth, affordability pressure, housing supply shortages, construction cost escalation and rising public concern about building quality and regulatory confidence.

The reform environment is focused on several connected priorities:

- increasing housing supply;
- speeding up appropriate approvals;

- improving building quality;
- strengthening consumer protection;
- improving regulator effectiveness;
- modernising domestic building law;
- restoring trust in the residential construction system.

The creation of stronger building regulatory structures and the reform of domestic building contract laws indicate that Victoria is already reconsidering how residential building work should be regulated, delivered and protected.

This creates a timely opportunity to examine whether the current licensing framework properly reflects the reality of residential renovation work.

CAPACITY ALLOCATION

4. The Builder Capacity Problem

Registered domestic builders are essential to Victoria's housing future. They are needed for new homes, townhouses, multi-unit projects, larger domestic building contracts, complex structural works and higher-risk construction.

However, registered builders are also pulled into smaller and medium renovation projects that may not always require the full capability profile of a domestic builder.

This creates a capacity allocation problem.

When builder capacity is absorbed by lower-risk renovation work, less capacity is available for new housing delivery and larger projects. In a market already under pressure, even small inefficiencies matter.

This issue is not about reducing standards. It is about matching the right level of regulation and practitioner capability to the right type of work.

A controlled RRC pathway could help relieve pressure on builders by allowing suitable experienced carpenters to undertake defined renovation projects within clear boundaries.

The policy logic is:

- new housing supply needs registered builders;
- renovation demand also needs capable practitioners;
- experienced carpenters already perform much of the practical renovation work;

- the current system does not provide a clear middle pathway;
- a regulated RRC category could improve workforce allocation without weakening consumer protection.

REGULATORY GAP

5. The Renovation Regulation Gap

Residential renovation work is often more complex than it appears from the outside.

Renovation work regularly involves:

- hidden structural defects;
- termite damage;
- water damage;
- out-of-level floors and walls;
- non-compliant previous works;
- asbestos risk;
- concealed services;
- staged decision-making;
- live-home conditions;
- budget uncertainty;
- homeowner confusion over who is legally allowed to perform or manage work.

Experienced carpenters often carry the practical responsibility for identifying and managing many of these issues on site. Yet the current licensing framework does not properly recognise an experienced renovation carpenter as a distinct practitioner category.

This creates a gap between real-world site responsibility and formal regulatory recognition.

The result can be:

- confusion for homeowners;
- inconsistent project arrangements;
- pressure on builders to oversee smaller work;
- under-recognition of experienced carpenters;
- informal workarounds;
- avoidable regulatory uncertainty.

The RRC pathway would address this gap by creating a defined legal structure for experienced renovation carpenters.

SYSTEM ROLE

6. The RRC Pathway as a Pressure-Release Valve

The RRC pathway should be positioned as a pressure-release valve within Victoria's housing and building system.

It would allow registered builders to remain focused on the work that most needs their full registration, while allowing experienced renovation carpenters to perform defined work under a regulated model.

<p>Builder Capacity Release</p> <p>Registered builders would face less pressure to take on smaller renovation projects that could be safely delivered by appropriately registered renovation carpenters.</p>	<p>Consumer Access</p> <p>Homeowners would have clearer access to experienced practitioners for renovation work, rather than navigating an unclear boundary between builder work, trade work and informal project management.</p>
<p>Regulatory Visibility</p> <p>Work that may currently sit in a grey area could be brought into a more visible system with registration, insurance, contracts and accountability.</p>	<p>Practical Capability Recognition</p> <p>Experienced carpenters with substantial renovation expertise would be recognised for the work they are already capable of performing, while still being subject to limits and safeguards.</p>

PROPOSED MODEL

7. Proposed RRC Model

A conservative two-tier model is recommended.

Tier 1 - Registered Residential Carpenter

Purpose: Defined small-to-medium residential renovation work. Indicative project limit: Up to \$100,000.

Eligibility requirements:

- Certificate III in Carpentry or equivalent;
- completed carpentry apprenticeship;
- minimum 10 years verified post-apprenticeship experience;

- demonstrated residential renovation experience;
- portfolio evidence;
- referee checks;
- domestic building contract knowledge;
- permit and compliance awareness;
- mandatory insurance;
- ongoing professional development.

Possible permitted work:

- non-new-home renovation work;
- repair and alteration work;
- decks and pergolas within defined limits;
- bathroom and laundry renovation coordination within defined limits;
- windows and doors;
- internal alterations;
- non-major structural renovation work;
- small staged renovation projects.

Tier 2 - Advanced Registered Residential Carpenter

Purpose: Larger and more complex renovation work within controlled limits. Indicative project limit: Up to \$200,000.

Eligibility requirements:

- all Tier 1 requirements;
- minimum 20 years verified post-apprenticeship experience;
- stronger renovation portfolio evidence;
- demonstrated project coordination experience;
- higher insurance requirements;
- advanced compliance assessment;
- stronger referee and assessment panel review;
- ongoing professional development.

Possible permitted work:

- larger staged renovations;
- more advanced renovation coordination;

- multi-trade renovation works within defined limits;
- higher-value residential renovation projects excluding new home construction and major high-risk work.

BOUNDARIES

8. Clear Exclusions

The RRC pathway must include clear exclusions to protect consumers, builders and the wider regulatory system.

The following should remain outside the RRC scope unless specifically approved through higher registration, engineering oversight or builder involvement:

- new home construction;
- multi-dwelling developments;
- apartment developments;
- major structural alterations requiring complex engineering responsibility;
- works requiring full domestic builder registration;
- high-risk cladding works;
- commercial building work;
- projects above the relevant tier cap;
- works outside the practitioner's demonstrated capability.

This conservative approach is important. The RRC pathway should be framed as a targeted renovation reform, not a broad replacement for domestic builder registration.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

9. Consumer Protection Framework

A successful RRC pathway must be built around consumer protection.

Minimum safeguards should include:

- Registration: Only approved practitioners may use the RRC title.

- Public register: Consumers can verify registration status.
- Insurance: Mandatory insurance appropriate to project value and work type.
- Written contracts: Required for work above a defined threshold.
- Scope disclosure: Clear written description of what is included and excluded.
- Variation rules: Written approval required for variations.
- Deposit/payment rules: Clear payment staging and limits.
- Permit awareness: Obligation to identify when building permits, engineering or builder involvement may be required.
- Complaint pathway: Consumers must have access to a dispute and disciplinary process.
- CPD: Ongoing professional development in building law, safety, waterproofing risk, structural awareness, contracts and consumer obligations.

The objective is not to lower the standard. The objective is to create a clearer standard where the current system is ambiguous.

BUILDER PROTECTION

10. Builder Protection and Industry Balance

The RRC pathway should be designed to support registered builders, not compete unfairly with them.

Builders remain central to Victoria's housing system. The RRC model should protect builders by ensuring:

- new home construction remains with registered builders;
- major structural projects remain with registered builders or appropriate oversight;
- higher-risk work is excluded;
- project value caps prevent uncontrolled scope creep;
- RRC practitioners cannot represent themselves as domestic builders;
- consumers receive clear written disclosure of the practitioner's registration category and limits.

This positioning is politically and commercially important.

The RRC pathway is not designed to replace builders. It is designed to reduce unnecessary renovation pressure on builders so they can focus on new homes, larger projects and higher-risk construction.

IMPLEMENTATION

11. Implementation Through the Building and Plumbing Commission

The RRC pathway could operate under the Building and Plumbing Commission as a defined registration category.

A staged implementation model is recommended.

Stage 1 - Consultation

Government, regulators, builders, carpenters, insurers, consumer groups and building surveyors should be consulted on scope, risk, eligibility and safeguards.

Stage 2 - Pilot Program

A limited pilot could test the model with a small number of experienced carpenters under strict conditions.

Stage 3 - Assessment and Review

The pilot should be assessed against:

- consumer complaint rates;
- insurance outcomes;
- project compliance;
- builder response;
- homeowner satisfaction;
- regulator workload;
- market demand;
- safety and quality performance.

Stage 4 - Formal Registration Category

If successful, the RRC category could be formally introduced with refined eligibility, scope and compliance requirements.

PILOT PROGRAM

12. Pilot Program Option

A pilot program would reduce political and regulatory risk.

Recommended pilot settings:

- 50 to 100 approved practitioners;
- 12 to 24 month trial;
- strict eligibility screening;
- project-value cap;
- mandatory insurance;
- mandatory written contracts;
- reporting obligations;
- consumer feedback collection;
- regulator oversight;
- independent review.

This would allow Victoria to test the pathway before wider rollout.

The pilot should focus only on defined renovation work, not new home construction.

RISK MANAGEMENT

13. Risk Management

<p>Risk: Perception that the model weakens builder registration</p> <p>Response: Use strict exclusions, project caps and clear public messaging that the pathway supports builders rather than replaces them.</p>	<p>Risk: Consumer confusion</p> <p>Response: Require plain-English disclosure of RRC scope, limits and insurance.</p>
<p>Risk: Insurance market resistance</p> <p>Response: Consult insurers early and use staged project caps.</p>	<p>Risk: Poor practitioner quality</p> <p>Response: Require verified experience, portfolio evidence, referee checks, CPD and disciplinary oversight.</p>

Risk: Scope creep

Response: Use clear exclusions, mandatory contract scope and regulator enforcement.

Risk: Industry opposition

Response: Involve builders in consultation and emphasise builder capacity release for new housing and major work.

BENEFITS

14. Strategic Benefits

The RRC pathway could deliver benefits across the housing system.

For Government

- Supports housing supply objectives;
- improves workforce allocation;
- strengthens renovation regulation;
- improves consumer protection;
- creates a practical reform option within broader building reform.

For Builders

- Reduces pressure from smaller renovation work;
- allows stronger focus on new homes and larger projects;
- protects builder registration through clear exclusions.

For Consumers

- Improves access to experienced renovation practitioners;
- creates clearer accountability;
- reduces confusion about who can do what;
- improves contract and insurance transparency.

For Carpenters

- Recognises real-world experience;
- creates a professional pathway;
- raises standards;
- rewards capability and responsibility.

For the Housing System

- Better matches practitioner capability to project type;
- reduces inefficiency;
- improves renovation delivery;
- supports new housing supply indirectly by freeing builder capacity.

RECOMMENDATION

15. Recommended Government Position

The Victorian Government should consider the RRC pathway as a targeted reform option within broader building system reform.

The recommended position is:

Establish a consultation process to assess whether a controlled Registered Residential Carpenter pathway could improve renovation regulation, support builder capacity, strengthen consumer protection and contribute to Victoria's housing supply objectives.

This is a moderate and practical recommendation. It does not require immediate legislative commitment. It asks for structured examination of a realistic reform option.

CLOSING STATEMENT

16. Closing Statement

Victoria's housing challenge requires more than new targets. It requires practical reforms that improve how existing industry capability is used.

Experienced renovation carpenters are already a critical part of residential construction. Many have decades of practical knowledge in managing the complex realities of renovation work. Yet the current framework does not provide a clear, controlled pathway for recognising this capability.

The Registered Residential Carpenter pathway would create that pathway.

It would not remove the need for registered builders. It would help protect and better allocate builder capacity. It would not weaken consumer protection. It would strengthen it by replacing ambiguity with clearer responsibility, registration, insurance and oversight.

The RRC pathway deserves serious consideration as part of Victoria's next stage of building reform.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

17. Proposed Consultation Questions

The following questions are proposed to guide structured discussion with government, regulators, industry and consumer stakeholders.

- 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 experience and qualification requirements should apply?
- What insurance model would protect consumers without making the pathway unworkable?
- How should the pathway interact with registered domestic builders?
- Should the model begin as a limited pilot program?
- What consumer disclosures should be mandatory?
- What role should the Building and Plumbing Commission play in assessment and oversight?
- How could the pathway support Victoria's broader housing supply objectives?

PUBLICATION DETAILS

18. Contact and Publication Details

This paper has been prepared by Carpenters for Housing Reform Victoria as a consultation draft for structured discussion with government, regulators, industry and standards stakeholders.

Core message: The RRC pathway is a targeted renovation-capacity reform designed to support housing supply, protect builders, and improve consumer protection through clearer accountability.

Website	www.carpentryreform.com.au
Email	admin@sonsiecarpentry.com
Prepared by	Carpenters for Housing Reform Victoria
Proponent	Daniel Sonsie, Sonsie Carpentry Pty Ltd
Status	Consultation Draft - May 2026