

Registered Residential Carpenter (RRC) Policy Brief
Industry-Led Reform Proposal
Victoria, Australia

1. Executive Summary

Victoria's residential renovation sector is operating under a regulatory framework that is no longer aligned with how the sector operates.

A substantial proportion of residential construction now occurs in existing homes, where experienced carpenters are the primary tradespeople.

This misalignment has resulted in:

- inefficiencies in project delivery
- unclear lines of accountability
- barriers to progression for experienced tradespeople
- inconsistent consumer outcomes

The Registered Residential Carpenter (RRC) pathway establishes a clearly defined, renovation-focused registration category for experienced carpenters.

The system is not broken — it is misaligned. The RRC corrects that misalignment.

2. The Problem: A Regulatory Framework Out of Step with Industry Practice

Victoria's licensing framework distinguishes between registered builders and individual trades, but it no longer reflects how the sector operates.

Common renovation activities:

- bathroom and kitchen renovations
- internal reconfigurations
- decks, pergolas, and outdoor structures
- door and window replacements

System-level issues:

- regulatory categories that do not reflect actual renovation practice
- absence of recognition for renovation-specialist carpenters
- inefficiencies created by unnecessary escalation to registered builders
- lack of clarity for consumers regarding responsibility and capability

This is not a capability issue within the workforce — it is a structural issue within the regulatory framework.

3. The Reform: Establishing a Defined Renovation-Focused Registration Category

The RRC establishes a clearly defined, renovation-focused registration category for experienced carpenters. It provides a clear pathway for entry and ongoing compliance.

The RRC creates a clear, accountable, and appropriately scoped registration category that reflects how renovation work is done in Victoria.

4. Eligibility Framework and Safeguards

Entry to the RRC pathway is based on demonstrated capability, not minimum compliance. Applicants must provide evidence of their skills and experience.

Core eligibility requirements:

- minimum 10 years of residential carpentry experience
- documented history of renovation project delivery
- verified references or portfolio evidence
- demonstrated knowledge of permits, regulations, and compliance obligations

Additional safeguards:

- appropriate insurance coverage
- completion of compliance and regulatory training
- ongoing professional development obligations

These requirements ensure that only experienced, renovation-capable practitioners obtain registration. This ensures

5. Defined Scope of Work: Clear Boundaries and Accountability

The RRC authorises delivery of non-structural residential renovation work within a clearly defined scope.

Included activities:

- bathroom and kitchen renovations
- internal refurbishments and reconfigurations
- decks, pergolas, verandas, and similar structures
- door and window upgrades
- non-structural renovation works

Excluded activities:

- new home construction
- major structural construction
- multi-storey developments
- large-scale residential building projects

Registered builder authority remains fully protected.

6. Future Structural Endorsement: A Controlled, Evidence-Based Option

A future, tightly controlled endorsement may allow limited structural work where appropriate safeguards are in place.

Possible inclusions:

- minor load-bearing wall adjustments
- defined structural modifications
- permit-controlled structural changes

Any endorsement would be subject to strict regulatory criteria and oversight.

7. Benefits of the RRC Pathway: A Targeted Productivity Reform

The RRC delivers measurable improvements across the residential renovation sector.

Key benefits:

- alignment between regulation and real-world renovation practice
- increased productivity and efficiency in the housing sector
- formal recognition of renovation-specialist carpenters
- strengthened consumer protection through clearer accountability

This is a productivity reform that strengthens the existing system without increasing risk. This supports more efficient

8. Consequences of Inaction: A Widening Regulatory Gap

Failure to reform the current system will entrench existing inefficiencies and consumer risks.

If no action is taken:

- continued regulatory misalignment
- rising consumer confusion and disputes
- underutilisation of highly skilled carpenters
- ongoing inefficiencies in renovation project delivery

The gap between regulation and reality will continue to widen.

9. Closing Statement

The Registered Residential Carpenter is not an expansion of scope.

It is a targeted correction to a system that no longer reflects industry reality.

It introduces clarity, accountability, and alignment — ensuring Victoria's residential renovation sector operates w

Daniel Sonsie

Founder — Carpenters for Housing Reform Victoria

Sonsie Carpentry Pty Ltd