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## LACK OF PRAGMATISM IN 10% APPRENTICES POLICY

The Andrews Government today announced its Major Projects Skills Guarantee policy that 10% of all work carried out on government funded construction projects over \$20 million must be undertaken by apprentices, trainees or engineering cadets, for new projects put out for tender after 1 January 2016.

“Whilst Master Builders supports efforts to increase the number of apprentices and trainees on worksites and to increase skills and careers in our industry, these changes are set to begin in a mere 6 working days time, during which the industry is closed for Christmas. The industry is going to find it very difficult to come to terms with the changes and implement their policies and strategies in such a short timeframe,” Master Builders Association of Victoria CEO Radley de Silva said.

“There is no transition period to allow builders to determine ways to be able to meet these new targets and create changes in their processes – including recruitment and retention policies – to be able to effectively achieve the goals.

“The very low benchmark of \$20 million of construction works, which can be partially funded by government, will mean that builders who are currently ill equipped to deal with these targets, might be now excluded from bidding for work,” Mr de Silva said.

We understand that the measurement of the 10% of work on a project will be by *hours worked* rather than by the number of workers on site. The details of the benchmark measurements are not yet available and this makes it even harder for builders to understand the requirements in time.

“The Andrews government has not listened to industry to create a practical solution to this issue. Whilst the goal of 10% apprentices and trainees is a worthy one, the way in which the work is recorded, should be by using systems and processes that are already in place on building sites. Creating a whole new hourly measurement requirement, merely adds costs and red-tape to the building process – with flow on effects to the costs of construction.

“Master Builders shares the government’s concern about poor apprentice completion rates, however, we do not consider that rushing through changes like this at a busy time of year where builders are not able to deal with the changes, is the best means of achieving successful change.

“Master Builders considers that a range of comprehensive reforms are required to improve apprentice completion rates, including by introducing trades registration to ensure that there is a purposeful career path for trades in our industry. Policies should not be pursued in isolation, and should be capable of practical implementation to ensure their effectiveness,” Mr de Silva said.

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