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July 29, 2021

MEDIA RELEASE

WA's civil construction industry needs thousands of skilled workers, says peak body

The Western Australian civil construction industry needs 3,900 additional workers to help it deliver a strong pipeline of infrastructure projects, according to a survey conducted by the Civil Contractors Federation WA.

Plant operators are most in shortage, with more than 1300 skilled operators of earthmoving, paving and other machines needed to meet demand state-wide. There are also significant shortages of concreting workers, plant mechanics/fitters, and civil engineers/project managers.

CCF WA CEO Andy Graham said the wide-ranging labour shortages identified in the survey reflected the current healthy activity in private and public sector civil construction.

"There's a good pipeline of government works, particularly in major transport projects, along with strong activity in new subdivisions and in mining construction," Mr Graham said.

"When you combine all that with a highly competitive WA jobs market in general, and severely limited access to skilled workers from overseas and interstate due to COVID-related travel restrictions, the result is thousands of job opportunities."

Mr Graham said civil contractors were actively working with their clients in government and in the private sector to ensure projects stayed on track where possible.

"We've had good discussions with the State Government on smoothing the transport project pipeline, which will take some of the pressure off the next year or two and free up more people and equipment for other work," he said.

"Contractors and suppliers are also working with their private sector clients in land development, resources construction and other sectors to manage issues created by the buoyant civil construction market. Through a spirit of collaboration, we can minimise the effects of current labour shortages and escalating equipment and materials costs, and ensure businesses stay healthy and projects stay on track."

Mr Graham said strong civil construction activity was good news for Western Australians, especially people looking for entry-level roles.

“The industry strongly supports the government’s ‘WA jobs’ focus. The Infrastructure Ready program, which will give hundreds of Western Australians a fresh start in civil construction, is a good example of how we’re working with government to create local jobs. Our message to Western Australians is, if you’re up for the challenge of working in civil construction, then we want to give you a chance.”

Mr Graham said recent additional government training incentives had been welcome and had led to strong take-up of civil construction traineeships, reinforcing the industry’s commitment to training.

“We expect the proposed introduction of civil construction apprenticeships, currently being considered by the Government, will create a clearer, stronger career pathway into our industry,” he said.

“But the reality is we’re short of skilled and experienced people, right now. Excavator, loader, and grader operators, for example, can take years to reach the level of skill and productivity required on complex infrastructure projects. Just like any other construction trade, it takes time. So we do need to look at increasing skilled migration to fill some of critical skills gaps in the short to medium term.”

-ENDS-

For further media enquiries please contact Caroline Boyer, Ph: 0406 083 396, cboyer@ccfwa.com.au

About Us:

Civil Contractors Federation (CCF) WA is the Western Australian branch of Australia’s peak civil construction industry body. As the voice of the civil construction industry we advocate for the development of our industry. With branches in all states and territories, as well as a national office in Canberra, the Civil Contractors Federation understands the local, state and national issues facing the civil construction industry.

CCF WA Western Australian Civil Construction Workforce Availability Survey Summary of results

All civil construction/maintenance companies currently active in Western Australia were invited to complete the CCF WA Western Australian Civil Construction Workforce Availability Survey during June 2021. There were 49 respondents with a combined civil construction and maintenance industry workforce of 4,274 workers, comprising 21 per cent of the total WA civil construction workforce of 20,358*.

Survey respondents reported a total of 964 unfilled job vacancies. Allowing a conservative 15% error margin, this equates to at least 3,900 additional civil construction workers required state-wide to meet current demand.

Other key survey findings:

- 88 per cent of businesses reported they had job vacancies (publicly advertised for two weeks or more) that can't be filled.
- 63 per cent of businesses surveyed said their ability to deliver existing contracts is moderately to severely constrained, while 61 per cent said their ability to tender for more work is being moderately to severely constrained.
- The jobs identified as most in need are plant operators and concrete workers (carpenter/joiners, concreters, and steel fixers).

CIVIL CONSTRUCTION JOBS	WORKERS NEEDED
Plant operators	1,334
Concrete workers	873
Other trade-level roles	518
Plant mechanics and fitters	424
Civil engineers, project managers & other professionals	408
Site supervisors	188
Truck drivers	188

* Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics: *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Employed persons by Industry group of main job (ANZSIC), Sex, State and Territory*. The total construction industry workforce in WA (12-month average to May 2021) is 121,701. CCF WA calculates civil construction workforce from Land Development and Site Preparation Services (100% of total) and Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction (85% of total) workforce data.