

To whom this may concern,

South Australia is unique in Australia for having a regulated hairdressing and barbering industry, governed by the [Hairdressers Act 1988](#) and the [2016 Hairdressing Regulations](#)

This states that in South Australia, you **must** hold a Certificate III in Hairdressing **or** Barbering (or equivalent) **or** be an apprentice to work as a hairdresser or barber.

The Minister for Consumer and Business Services regulates this legislation, and there are substantial penalties for both employers and individuals who breach the Act.

This strong regulatory foundation has created a resilient apprenticeship system, particularly within the hairdressing sector. In 2023, South Australian hairdressing apprentices achieved a **68.8% completion rate**, reflecting the effectiveness of a regulated framework, the protections in place, and the clear pathways available to learners. Notably, the two regulated states, New South Wales and South Australia, record the highest completion rates for hairdressing apprentices. By contrast, the national average completion rate sits at just **30–35%**, underscoring the strength and stability of regulated models.

The barbering industry continues to encounter persistent challenges. Although legislation applies equally in South Australia, a substantial number of barbers currently practising do so without a recognised qualification. This not only places them outside the scope of legal compliance but also prevents them from entering into training contracts with apprentices. As a result, barbering apprenticeships remain less stable, with completion rates at **57.6%** 2023. More recently, 2024 data reveal a sharp decline to **20%**, reflecting the destabilising influence of unqualified barbers delivering informal, non-compliant in-salon training.

This is a direct consequence of the current Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes, which are widely regarded as cumbersome, costly, and overly burdensome, ultimately creating additional barriers to achieving formal recognition.

In South Australia, to address this barrier, the [South Australian Skills Act](#), which is an Act relating to apprenticeships, traineeships, vocational education and training, adult community education, **and education services for overseas students**, provides delegated powers to the Skills Commissioner. The South Australian Skills Commission, through the South Australian Skills Act 2008, offers the [Occupational Recognition Service](#) (ORS).

ORS is for people who haven't completed an apprenticeship or traineeship, but have developed sufficient skills and knowledge through employment, on-the-job or other training, in hairdressing or barbering. Applicants must have completed the equivalent duration of an apprenticeship (42 months of current industry experience). ORS is available to individuals living, relocating or with work contracts in South Australia.

Successful applicants receive an Occupational Certificate from the South Australian Skills Commission, certifying their skills and knowledge in the specified occupation.

This SAHBA and industry-led Occupational Recognition Service ensures that all skilled people, whether hairdressers or barbers, **are not prevented** from working due to regulatory barriers.

We are already seeing strong interest from hairdressers and barbers in pursuing this recognition pathway, and SAHBA has been successful in gaining a grant to support its implementation. This will ensure that professionals are afforded the same opportunities for recognition as hairdressers and barbers who qualify, while maintaining the integrity and high standards of South Australia's regulated industry.

SAHBA strongly supports the establishment of a national regulated framework, with clear industry-led entry requirements that uphold professional standards. Such a framework is essential to protect consumers, safeguard workers from exploitation, and ensure that fair work practices are consistently maintained across the hairdressing and barbering industries.

Yours sincerely,



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