



Capability gaps in Queensland painting businesses

What is under-practised when apprentices become trade qualified?

Queensland and Australian labour market insights

Drawing on evidence from Jobs and Skills Australia, Jobs Queensland, NCVER, training package materials and related industry sources.

Executive summary



Labour market context

- Qualified painters remain difficult to recruit in many parts of Australia, including Queensland.
- Employers often need workers who are productive sooner and can work with less supervision.
- Capability gaps affect rework, productivity, customer confidence and margin.



Key takeaway

The gap is not only technical. Newly trade-qualified painters often need stronger communication, job-planning and customer-facing capability to be fully job-ready.



What businesses feel most

- Slow handover from apprentice to independent worker
- Inconsistent finish quality across different jobs
- Limited confidence in client conversations
- Weak estimating and scope-control skills

Indicative synthesis based on Jobs and Skills Australia, Jobs Queensland, NCVET and industry sources.

Top 5 capability problems



01

Client communication and service

clarifying scope, asking questions early, explaining options, managing expectations.



02

Estimating and job planning

measuring, quoting, sequencing work, identifying variations, planning time and materials.



03

Surface preparation and defect diagnosis

reading substrates, moisture awareness, identifying cracking, fillers, sanding, coating prep.



04

Application quality and efficiency

spray technique, cutting-in, masking, finish consistency, defect rectification, working productively.



05

Digital, compliance and self-management

documentation, photos, basic digital tools, WHS records, communication with supervisors and clients.



These gaps matter because trade qualification does not always equal full job-readiness in live customer environments.

Why painting businesses win jobs

“ For many businesses, the differentiator is the **client experience** as much as the paint finish. ”

What helps win work

- ✓ Fast response and clear communication
- ✓ Professional presentation and punctuality
- ✓ Trust, cleanliness and reliability
- ✓ Clear written quotes and scope clarity
- ✓ Ability to explain products, finishes and process
- ✓ Positive reviews, referrals and confidence

“ Communication and customer service appear to be major differentiators in winning and retaining jobs. ”



Why this matters



Customers often compare professionalism before they compare technical detail.



Good communication reduces disputes and increases confidence.



Where technical skill is similar, service quality can be the differentiator.

Does apprenticeship training cover communication?



Usually covered

- Basic workplace communication
- Teamwork and following instructions
- WHS communication and reporting
- Working with supervisors and other trades



Often underdeveloped in practice

- Client meetings and phone etiquette
- Explaining systems, finishes and trade-offs
- Handling objections, complaints and changes
- Writing or talking through quotes and variations
- Managing expectations and customer confidence
- Confident independent communication on site



Bottom line

Technical training is central, but customer communication is not always deeply practised, explicitly taught or consistently assessed before workers become trade qualified. Much of it is learned informally on the job.

Training Solutions

To close the capability gaps and prepare apprentices for trade success, training must be practical, integrated and industry-aligned.



Strengthen Under-Practised Skills

Embed structured practice in quoting, customer communication, surface preparation and detail work.



Real-World Application

Use authentic projects, site-based simulations and scenario-based learning to build confidence.



Enhance Communication Training

Teach apprentices how to ask the right questions, explain solutions and manage client expectations.



Support RTO-Industry Collaboration

Co-design assessments and training with employers to ensure relevance and workplace readiness.



Focus on Business Skills

Build commercial awareness, quoting accuracy and time management to improve job outcomes.

“

Capable apprentices build stronger businesses and better outcomes for clients.

Immersive training for apprentices

VR capability solutions for
the painting industry

Practical, scalable learning for real-world
customer, product and quoting scenarios.

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Want to explore these findings, the capability gap in your business, or training strategies that build confident, job-ready painters?

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