



**26th NAWIC annual general meeting**  
**Chair's report**  
**November 2020 to November 2021**

## Overview

At the close of this year's AGM, we will have had the extraordinary privilege of welcoming five new directors to our Board. Extraordinary because the Board has decided to maintain the maximum number of elected directors on the Board for the coming term in consideration of the momentum required to honour our commitment to our Strategic Goal of 25% women in construction by 2025. The Board is looking forward to welcoming its new directors to their first meeting directly after the AGM as well as the energy new directors will bring to the Board.

The directors our membership will have elected came from a field of 25 individual nominees, the most ever for any election, and is indicative of the impact that NAWIC is having and the desire of our membership to be active participants in changing the culture of the construction industry. The refresh of our Board comes at the end of another challenging year, just when we thought the one before was hard enough. We started the year with more crippling but necessary lockdowns which eventually became the longest any other country has experienced. Whilst the worst affected states have commenced the roll back of strict restrictions, we are mindful that the borders are not all free to pass through yet and the impact that this is having, including social, economic and mental should not be downplayed.

It has been a great pleasure working with the Board this year to produce our boldest strategic plan yet. As NAWIC's mission and reason for its existence has matured and expanded over these last 25 years, we must look to the future of our organisation and why it exists. We recognise that many of our members and stakeholders want to participate more fully in resolving the issues behind the declining number of women entering the industry. The Board is looking forward to continuing our work supporting each Chapter to ensure these issues experienced by women in construction are resolved. It is only then will we see more and more girls and young women choosing construction as a career.

The timing of our Strategic Plan and the legacy we are creating through its execution could not be any more serendipitous. Infrastructure Australia's most recent report identifies NAWIC as one of the agents of change that will be required in order to challenge and change the industry to attract and accommodate more women if industry wants to meet the target of 105k new

skilled workers by 2023. Now is the time for NAWIC to step up another level and provide solutions to the ever-increasing questions from government and industry about getting more women into construction. We are already doing it at Chapter level so it is time to amplify our efforts and nationalise some of the brilliant ideas and programs which have commenced at Chapter level but could benefit every state and territory. The over-subscribed Male Allies national trial currently sponsored by Woolworths is one of the steps towards realising a vision that started in QLD but could start affecting cultural change within our industry nationally.

## REPORT CARD

Since our AGM last year, the Board has focused on creating and commencing delivery on our Strategic Plan. We have focused on delivering and affecting tangible change within the industry with the sole purpose of attracting and retaining more women into our industry. The strategic goal of 25% by 2025 does not need to be a stretch goal but can in fact become a reality if we are able to continue working with our industry colleagues, other industry associations and all levels of government.

By choosing to focus on strategies around Advocacy, Education and our NAWIC Community and connection, we have started to engage in the resolution of some of the barriers preventing women from entering and staying in the industry – raising the number of women in the industry through retention by addressing pay inequality; feeling safe and respected in the workplace and having the ability to advance and improve within their chosen career whilst maintaining flexibility to manage their roles outside the workplace. Attracting more women into the industry by assisting organisations through programs like the Male Allies program to create more equitable and inclusive workplaces; creating and supporting programs and organisations who focus on education to attract more young women into our industry.

One of the first important steps towards having a “seat at the table” was NAWIC’s ability to contribute submissions and additional evidence the Inquiry into Commonwealth Procurement practices and we look forward to the recommendations that will come out of that Standing Committee. The biggest highlight was finally having the ability, albeit virtually, to hold our

inaugural Forum facilitated and then broadcast by ABC Radio National's "Big Ideas" program. The discussion was the first step in actively calling attention to what needs to change in the industry in order to make it a viable and credible career offering for women across all aspects of the industry and all stages of their careers, from entry level to senior leadership positions.

Our membership of the Australian Construction Industry Forum (ACIF) has continued to enable NAWIC to influence the organisation's top policy priorities, namely to "increase the number of women entering and staying in the construction industry across all disciplines". With the Australian Constructors Association also being a member, we have been able to actively participate in discussions at this level regarding the development of the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce's Culture Standards.

Finally, our campaign to influence policy at all levels of Government has commenced with introductions of our Chapters to the various Offices for Women across the country as well as further introductions to Infrastructure portfolios within State and Territory governments. The Board congratulates all those chapters who have actively maintained those relationships and continue to influence policy in favour of increasing the number of women in construction. The Board has established an ongoing relationship with the Commonwealth Office for Women which it will continue to develop throughout the coming year.

## IWD SCHOLARSHIP

This year's International Women's Day scholarship, sponsored by NAWIC saw another record number of applications in 2021. Last year's winner, Sarah Lawlor presented the findings of her research at the IWD Scholarship presentation hosted by CULT this year. Sarah's analysis of the diversity within the sustainability sector finding that whilst women participate at higher levels than in other areas of the built environment, having more women in leadership positions would be one mechanism of improving sustainability outcomes.

This year's scholarship was awarded to Emma Georgiou whose presentation we are looking forward to receiving and sharing with the membership next March. I encourage you to all read the papers of previous IWD Scholarship winners on our website.

## MEMBERSHIP

We were finally able to roll out our new membership structure this year and the Board is extremely grateful for the work of the Membership Committee, very ably lead by the Vice Chair, Christina Yiakkoupis who worked closely with our new General Manager to ensure that the new structure was rolled out as seamlessly as possible. We finally have a membership structure that reflects the diversity of our industry as our corporate members are now able to include every employee, not just women, to become members of NAWIC and to not only benefit from our membership but to contribute to our strategic goals. We have welcomed 79 new corporate members to NAWIC and are equally grateful to our existing corporate members who have embraced the new structure and the benefits it will bring to their organisations.

Based on the membership figures current at the AGM last year in comparison with the same time as this year, we have increased new membership by 62%. In coming months, we hope to be able to provide you with access to regular data around our membership numbers and demographics of our membership.

The Board has agreed to maintain its member rewards program as the benefits have continued to be taken up by our members with an increasing number of members taking advantage of the offers. We are also pleased to continue with our EAP program run by Veritas. We hope that it continues to be useful resource, particularly if you don't already have access to a similar resource.

We have also welcomed the addition of a General Manager to our team. Whilst the position is new, the knowledge and experience of the national organisation is not. The Board was very happy to appoint Lauren Fahey to the position of General Manager to assist the Board guide and develop NAWIC into an organisation capable of influencing government and industry to better support our Strategic goals.

## NAWIC 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Journal – 2021

The release of the NAWIC Journal this year to celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was another incredible accomplishment this year and I congratulate our Journal's editor, Kirrily Baty for producing another outstanding publication. Making the decision to self-publish again this year was only possible with Kirrily and the support from Lauren Fahey, our GM and Briana Cicchelli our Communications manager. Thank you to all of you who contributed. If you have missed it, a link to the journal is available on our website

## NAWIC AWARDS

NAWIC's State and Territory Chapter Awards have been plagued with similar issues this year as some Chapters have been forced to postpone their awards into the New year as the COVID restrictions ease slowly. Congratulations to the winners who have been able to participate in awards this year and for the remainder, we look forward to hearing the result of those Awards ceremonies to come. On behalf of the Board, I thank the Presidents and Awards Committee Chairs in each Chapter for both making the difficult decisions in relation to how your Awards would appear this year, if at all, and maintaining those all-important communications with your membership. The NAWIC Awards are increasing in professional value every year and are an important part of NAWIC's mission to promote the achievements of women in construction.

## THANK YOU

As always, I wish to acknowledge and thank all our volunteers throughout our Chapters. Your ongoing passion and contribution to NAWIC's mission throughout the difficulties posed by another year of COVID-related difficulties, is nothing short of extraordinary. To the Chapter Presidents and the Chapter Councils they lead – you continue to be outstanding representatives of our organisation who are supporting and affecting real change for the benefit of your local members.

To our outgoing Board members, Fiona Doherty and Hayley Gilmour, I thank you sincerely for your service to the Board and your ongoing presence, knowledge and contributions (not to mention your accents), will be greatly missed. To the Board – to each of you who have sat on the Board this year - I thank you for your constant encouragement, your innovative and strategic thinking and your steady hands throughout what has been a challenging year. Your ongoing passion for this organisation and your willingness to contribute your time and knowledge will continue to shape NAWIC for the next decade.

**WE ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE | WE EDUCATE & EMPOWER |  
WE CONNECT | WE ARE NAWIC**

END OF REPORT