



## **RIGID, NARROW AND INFORMAL**

# **SHIFTING THE GENDER IMBALANCE IN CONSTRUCTION: BUILDING INDUSTRY SPECIFIC RESPONSES**

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## FOREWORD

In 2013, I returned from the Middle East to Australia to commence a PhD. Prior to that point, I had spent over fifteen years working on construction sites. I came to my PhD wanting to make sense of my career and experience as a woman in construction. The first few months of my PhD were spent reading what other scholars had said about the experiences of women and men in construction. When I read the work of Barbara Bagilhole, Andrew Dainty and Wendy Faulkner, in particular, I felt like they had been observing me throughout my construction career. They captured my experiences and put them down on a page.

My inspiration for this report was research conducted 20 years ago in the UK by Barbara Bagilhole, Andrew Dainty and Richard Neale. This report endeavours to build on the work of these scholars and will form the basis of an academic paper, to be co-authored with Andrew Dainty.

I am immensely grateful to the National Association of Women in Construction and the scholarships key sponsor CULT for this scholarship. As a full-time student, the scholarship has been a valuable financial support and has provided an avenue to showcase my research to a wider industry audience. As the recipient of this year's scholarship, I have drawn on my doctoral research conducted from 2013-2016 at UNSW. I am indebted to the construction companies and individuals and to international academics and industry practitioners who have participated in my research. I am especially grateful to Andrew Dainty of Loughborough University (UK) and Chrissi McCarthy, a fellow PhD Candidate and Principal of UK consulting firm, Constructing Equality for providing international insight in this report. I am beholden to my industry mentor, Ben Richardson (Mirvac) and my academic supervisors from UNSW, Louise Chappell, Martin Loosemore, and Abigail Powell for their support and guidance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The original front cover image is by my friend and colleague, Chris Peeters.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The construction industry is Australia's third largest employer and a central economic player in the Australian economy. Despite this, construction remains unyielding as Australia's most male dominated industry.

NAWIC and leading construction companies recognise that by maintaining the gender status quo in construction, the industry is denying itself of valuable talent and undermining its existing workforce.

To date, initiatives aimed at shifting construction's gender imbalance have been generic in approach and focused on women and individual agency.

### FINDINGS

- **Rigid** work practices, **narrow** career pathways and **informal** talent management operate across the career landscape in construction to undermine women's participation and success in the sector.
- The same practices also couple to undermine the enjoyment, health, and wellbeing of **all construction professionals** – men and women.
- A **tolerance of sexism** exists in construction that undermines women's enjoyment, success and attraction.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The construction industry needs to change. Existing construction practices need to be analysed and challenged and leaders need to take **ownership of gender diversity**.
- Construction projects need to be planned, resourced and managed with **employee wellbeing** in mind.

## INTRODUCTION

As Australia's third largest employer and a major contributor to Gross Domestic Product, the construction sector is a central economic player.<sup>2</sup> It is also Australia's most male dominated sector, where despite government and company-led gender diversity initiatives; women's participation in construction is declining.<sup>3</sup> This is not an issue isolated to Australia; other western nations echo a similar gender profile in construction.<sup>4</sup> Government and industry have repeatedly acknowledged that this is not just a matter of equity and justice, it is also a critical factor if the sector wants to fully realise its productivity and innovation capabilities.<sup>5</sup>

Currently, in Australia, men account for 88 % of the construction workforce participation and 86 % of white-collar managers and professionals.<sup>6</sup> Blue collar trades, who are not the focus of this research proposal, are almost completely male dominated (99%).<sup>7</sup> For women construction professionals, poor participation rates are compounded by poor retention rates; early enthusiasm for the sector declines with increased exposure. As a result, women leave construction careers 38 % faster than their male counterparts.<sup>8</sup> For those women who chose to develop a career in construction, the track to the top is steep and often with few female

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<sup>2</sup> ABS 2010. *Feature article: A statistical overview of the construction industry - 1350.0 - Australian Economic Indicators* Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>3</sup> AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2006. *Census of Population and Housing*. Canberra: ABS.

ABS 2016. *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, May 2016 - 6291.0.55.003*, Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Percentage of women in construction: Australia 11.7%, UK 10.1%, USA 9%, Denmark 10%, Netherlands 9.5%, Italy 6.3%, Spain 5%

ABS 2013. *Private Sector Construction Industry*, Cat. No. 8772.0. In: ABS (ed.). Canberra.

SANG, K. & POWELL, A. 2012b. *Gender inequality in the construction industry: Lessons from Pierre Bourdieu Management*, 237, 247.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR 2011. *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*. In: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS (ed.). USA.

BYRNE, J., CLARKE, L. & VAN DER MEER, M. 2005. *Gender and ethnic minority exclusion from skilled occupations in construction: a Western European comparison*. *Construction Management and Economics*, 23, 1025-1034.

<sup>5</sup> OECD 2014. *Achieving stronger growth by promoting a more gender-balanced economy*.

ENGINEERS AUSTRALIA 2014. *A strategy for inclusiveness, well-being and diversity in engineering workplaces*. Engineers Australia

<sup>6</sup> WGEA 2012. *Industry Snapshot: Construction*. In: AGENCY, W. G. E. (ed.). Sydney.

<sup>7</sup> NSW GOVERNMENT 2013. *Women in trades: the missing 48 percent*. *Women NSW Occasional Paper March 2013*. Family & Community Services, Women NSW.

<sup>8</sup> PROFESSIONALS AUSTRALIA 2007. *Women in the Professions Survey Report 2007*. Melbourne: The Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists & Managers.

cohort. Men, on the other hand, enjoy the majority of senior management, project leadership and operational positions in the sector.<sup>9</sup> Aside from being unfair, gender inequity exacerbates skills shortages, reduces productivity and constrains innovation.<sup>10</sup>

In 2015, Professions Australia - a network of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Management) professionals – reported that “cultural barriers, inflexible working practices and systemic bias in advancement strategies and inequities in remuneration” as the key barriers to women’s retention and progression in STEM careers.<sup>11</sup> These barriers persist despite government backed and company-based gender diversity policies and initiatives.<sup>12</sup> A range of laws and regulations focused on gender discrimination and harassment underpin the legal case for gender equality and diversity including legislative requirements for gender reporting for companies with over 100 employees.<sup>13</sup> These reporting requirements are backed by ‘softer’ non-compulsory measures from the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX). Industry groups such as the Property Council of Australia have established sector specific ‘Male Champions of Change’ groups that aim to engage and draw on the high profile power and experience of the sector’s male business leaders.<sup>14</sup> From Architecture, Parlour has established Marion’s List: a

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<sup>9</sup> WGEA 2014. *WGEA Data Explorer: Construction*. In: *WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY AGENCY (ed.)*. Sydney.

<sup>10</sup> LOOSEMORE, M., DAINTY, A. & LINGARD, H. 2003. *Human resource management in construction projects: strategic and operational approaches*, London, Taylor and Francis.

TOOHEY, T., COLOSIMO, D. & BOAK, A. 2009. *Australia's Hidden Resource: The Economic Case for Increasing Female Participation*. Goldman Sachs JB Were.

<sup>11</sup> PROFESSIONALS AUSTRALIA 2015. *The Slow Track: Women in the STEM Professions Survey Report* Melbourne: Professionals Australia (formerly APESMA). 37

<sup>12</sup> SANG, K. & POWELL, A. 2012a. Equality, diversity, inclusion and work–life balance in construction. In: DAINTY, A. & LOOSEMORE, M. (eds.) *Human Resource Management in Construction: Critical Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge.

AHRC 2013. *Women in Male Dominated Industry - Fact Sheet*.

LAPLONGE, D. & ALBURY, K. 2013. *Doing Safer Masculinities: Addressing at-Risk Gendered Behaviours on Mine Sites*. *M/C Journal*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT 2012. *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*. C2015C00088.

<sup>14</sup> PROPERTY COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA. 2014. *Property Male Champions of Change Charter* [Online]. <https://www.propertycouncil.com.au>

Available:

[https://www.propertycouncil.com.au/Web/Our\\_Industry/Diversity/Champions\\_of\\_Change/Web/Industry\\_Leadership/Diversity/Male\\_Champions\\_of\\_change.aspx?hkey=164d1c84-175f-4d8c-af48-22bc7ff5c1c8](https://www.propertycouncil.com.au/Web/Our_Industry/Diversity/Champions_of_Change/Web/Industry_Leadership/Diversity/Male_Champions_of_change.aspx?hkey=164d1c84-175f-4d8c-af48-22bc7ff5c1c8) [Accessed 14 December 2015 2015].

public register of women in the built environment and Architecture for expert commentary and input.<sup>15</sup>

Construction companies have also recognised the need to be pro-active in retaining good talent – female and male. Large construction companies are engaged in a range of policies and initiatives focused on gender equity and diversity. Initiatives include women’s support groups, skill development for women, unconscious bias training, targeted graduate recruitment, gender bias training for recruiters and management, gender pay reviews, parental and care leave, child care rebates, mentoring, gender diversity committees, gender targets and flexibility programs/pilots. In recent years, large construction companies have begun to broaden their response to gender diversity; paying particular attention to flexibility and employee well-being.<sup>16</sup> These gender diversity initiatives vary in nature and intent; some draw on learnings from other industries - unconscious bias training, gender targets and gender pay reviews – whereas others address systemic work practices specific to construction – for example, flexibility pilots/programs.

## RESEARCH AIM

This research seeks to step aside from gender diversity responses that are individual or generic in focus, rather it seeks to turn the stoplight on the taken-for-granted practices operating within construction and understand:

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<sup>15</sup> <http://archiparlour.org/marion/>

<sup>16</sup> GALEA, N., POWELL, A., LOOSEMORE, M. & CHAPPELL, L. 2015a. *Designing robust and revisable policies for gender equality: lessons from the Australian construction industry. Construction Management and Economics*, 1-15.

1. What are the seemingly neutral construction practices that have gendered effects on the career pathway of female and male construction professionals?
2. Which construction specific responses are needed to address the sector's gender imbalance?

## PART ONE. WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Over the last few decades, international and Australian scholars have drawn attention to construction practices and norms that act against women's career empowerment. These include construction's culture of long-hours<sup>17</sup> and presenteeism<sup>18</sup>, inflexible work practices<sup>19</sup>, sexual harassment<sup>20</sup> and gender bias<sup>21</sup>, lack of career opportunities<sup>22</sup> and access to informal networks<sup>23</sup>. Most research has focused on specific work practices or norms in isolation; few researchers have drawn these factors together to build a picture of how these practices interconnect and may even accumulate.

In the 1990s, Andrew Dainty, Barbara Bagilhole, and Richard Neale's research did just this. Dainty et al. set out to map the career landscape of women and men in large UK construction companies.<sup>24</sup> The researchers found that construction practices - career pathways, talent management and construction project management - operated to produce disparate career experiences for women and men.

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<sup>17</sup> WATTS, J. H. 2007a. 'Allowed into a Man's World' Meanings of Work-Life Balance: Perspectives of Women Civil Engineers as 'Minority' Workers in Construction. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 16, 37-57.

<sup>18</sup> WATTS, J. H. 2009. Leaders of men: women 'managing' in construction. *Work, Employment & Society*, 23, 512-530.

<sup>19</sup> LINGARD, H. & FRANCIS, V. 2004. The work-life experiences of office and site-based employees in the Australian construction industry. *Construction Management and Economics*, 22, 991-1002.

<sup>20</sup> WATTS, J. H. 2007b. Porn, pride and pessimism: experiences of women working in professional construction roles. *Work, Employment & Society*, 21, 299-316.

<sup>21</sup> BARNARD, S., POWELL, A., BAGILHOLE, B. & DAINITY, A. 2010. Researching UK Women Professionals in SET: A Critical Review of Current Approaches. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology [2040-0748] Barnard, 5 yr:2010 2*

<sup>22</sup> FAULKNER, W. 2009. Doing gender in engineering workplace cultures. II. Gender in/authenticity and the in/visibility paradox. *Engineering Studies*, 1, 169-189.

<sup>23</sup> SANG, K., DAINITY, A. & ISON, S. G. 2013. Gender in the UK architectural profession: (re)producing and challenging hegemonic masculinity. *Work, Employment & Society*, 0, 1-18.

<sup>24</sup> DAINITY, A., NEALE, R. & BAGILHOLE, B. 2000a. Comparison of men's and women's careers in UK construction industry. *Journal of Professional Issues in Engineering Education and Practice*, 126, 110-115.

DAINTY, A. R. J., BAGILHOLE, B. M. & NEALE, R. H. 2000b. A grounded theory of women's career under-achievement in large UK construction companies. *Construction Management and Economics*, 18, 239-250.

## CONSTRUCTION CAREER PATHWAY

In terms of women's entry into construction, it was found that tertiary education did not prepare women for the exclusionary nature of construction and women were oversold opportunities by construction companies<sup>25</sup>. Once employed, women's vertical career progression was more variable than men's and their transition from junior to middle management was particularly problematic. Women experienced longer tenure in junior positions in comparison to their male peers and this influenced women's ability to obtain key management roles in the business like project manager and project director. Frustrated by a lack of opportunity and progression, women resorted to inter-company mobility rather than building tenure within one company. This practice failed them; it limited their internal company power and consequently resulted in fewer women in positions of power.

Four factors stifled women's career pathway: the roles they were employed in and the size and nature of the projects, informal organisational talent management, women's high use of inter-company mobility to gain promotions and self-perceptions of their ambition and ability.

## TALENT MANAGEMENT

One factor that influenced women's career pathway was how talent was managed within construction companies. In the construction companies studied, human resource management practices - recruitment, job allocation and promotions - had shifted under the

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<sup>25</sup> POWELL, A., BAGILHOLE, B. M. & DAINTY, A. R. 2006. The problem of women's assimilation into UK engineering cultures: can critical mass work? *Equal Opportunities International*, 25, 688-699.

management of senior operational/project managers and line managers, who were primarily men. This practice acted to restrict staff mobility between operating divisions and allowed subcultures to develop within regional areas and on construction projects. Within these subcultures regional managers and project leaders were given the autonomy to maintain existing hierarchies and informal networks and observe their own rules and work practices within reason; regions and projects were effectively operating like little kingdoms. It was concluded that this practice perpetuated gender biases - particularly for women reaching childbearing years (the late 20s to early 30s) – that restricted career opportunities for women.

In construction's hyper-competitive environment the introduction of gender diversity policies seen to advantage women, fuelled resentment towards women. Resentment was expressed through overt and covert harassment and discrimination towards women that left women managing micro-barriers as well as their careers. With increased exposure to the industry, women became more disillusioned with their career choice. As result, women left the industry relatively early in their career. In contrast, men were able to concentrate on their careers; building tenure within their company and proactively developing informal male networks that gained them opportunities and advancement.

## **CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

Women's lack of progression was not the only factor influencing women's career enjoyment and retention. Construction's hyper-competitive masculine environment celebrated practices of total availability, presenteeism and work/life imbalance. Employees who adhered to these

practices were rewarded, while those who did not or were unable to be sidelined. Due to men and women's gendered social norms operating inside and outside of construction, these work practices had differential career outcomes for men and women. Young women expressed a concern that they had to make a choice between a career in construction or a family oriented lifestyle.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research does not aim to replicate Barbara Bagilhole, Andrew Dainty and Richard Neale's research but to exam their findings within present day Australia.

The research draws on feminist institutionalist<sup>26</sup> and gender theories<sup>27</sup>. These theories acknowledge that seemingly neutral rules and practices used in construction may have different implications on the lives of women and men working in construction.<sup>28 29</sup>

This research report employs a qualitative methodology to highlight and untangle how taken-for-granted construction practices shape women and men's career pathways in construction.

Data was collected in accordance with UNSW Human Ethics approval from 2014-2016.

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<sup>26</sup> New institutionalist theory recognises that our behaviours are shaped and governed by formal rules - including contracts, policies and laws - and informal rules - including norms, practices and narratives. For more on New Institutional theory see MARCH, J. G. & OLSEN, J. P. 1984. The new institutionalism: organizational factors in political life. *The American political science review*, 734-749.

<sup>27</sup> Gender theory recognises that gender, not to be conflated with biological sex, is a category tied to cultural symbolism, practice and performance. The theories of hegemonic masculinity by Raelyn Connell are drawn on in understanding gender and masculinities. CONNELL, R. W. & MESSERSCHMIDT, J. W. 2005. *Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. Gender and Society*, 19, 829-859.

For more information on gender theory relation to masculine industries see ACKER, J. 1990. Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations. *Ibid.* 4, 139-158. LAPLONGE, D. 2014. *So you think you're tough? Getting serious about gender in mining*, Factive Pty Ltd.

<sup>28</sup> For more information about rules and gender in construction see GALEA, N., POWELL, A., LOOSEMORE, M. & CHAPPELL, L. 2015b. Designing robust and revisable policies for gender equality: lessons from the Australian construction industry. *Construction Management and Economics*, 33, 375-389.

GAINS, F. & LOWNDES, V. 2014. How does the Gendered Organisation of Political Life Make a Difference? Examining an Institution in Formation - Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales. *APSA 2014 Annual Meeting Paper*,

<sup>29</sup> I acknowledge that women and men are not homogenous groups and that a limitation of this report is that it does not unravel intersectionality and gender.

**PHASE ONE:** 60 semi-structured interviews with construction professionals: 30 men: 30 women. Participants were employees of large construction firms (tier one or two). While I acknowledge that the bulk of construction workers are employed by small to medium size companies, large construction companies, however account for 77% of total construction work done by value in Australia.<sup>30</sup> Large construction companies attract the vast majority of qualified construction professionals (men and women) including, project managers, construction managers, quantity surveyors, estimators, engineers, designers and planners. These organisations perform the role of change agents in the industry and unlike small or medium enterprises that tend to be family based; these major companies are likely to have developed human resource and gender diversity policies.

In the interviews, participants were asked about their career history; how they were recruited, how they have progressed in their career and what process looked like and their career aspirations. The interview also covered how participants negotiate work life balance and why participants chose a construction career, why they stay in construction and if they have ever considered leaving. Where possible, the participants were matched according to age, the length of time in career or position.

Interviews were approximately 60-90 minutes in length. The interviews were recorded (with permission) and then transcribed. Participant's identity and anonymity have been protected at all times and aliases have been used in this report to maintain anonymity. Once transcribed, the interviews were imported into Nvivo qualitative software and coded to

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<sup>30</sup> ABS 2012. Labour Force Australia, cat no 6202.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics,.

facilitate the organisation of text.<sup>31</sup> By coding, I mean searching across the data set to find common themes and repeated patterns of meanings.

**PHASE TWO:** includes interviews with construction gender diversity experts internationally.

The aim of these interviews was to investigate construction specific diversity policies and initiatives being applied with success across the world. The interviewees in this section phase include Professor Andrew Dainty, Loughborough University UK and Constructing Equality (UK) founder and director, Chrissi McCarthy.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> RICHARDS, L. 2000. *Using nvivo in qualitative research*, Melbourne, QSR International Pty Ltd.

<sup>32</sup> <http://constructingequality.co.uk>

## PART TWO. FINDINGS

This chapter draws attention to how practices in three areas of construction - career pathways, talent management, and construction project management – act to shape different career landscapes for women and men construction professionals.

### 1. CAREER PATHWAYS

Women and men choose a construction career for very similar reasons: they either ‘fall into’ it by accident, have a family member already working in construction, enjoyed STEM subjects at school or were interested in a technical career that was multifaceted and produced a legacy of built form.

*“I was like, “Oh I like maths,” and then chose to do engineering.” It was the introduction to engineering students while working at Maccas that I thought, I liked maths, I wasn’t very good at it but I enjoyed it, so I might try engineering. (Phoebe, Site Engineer)*

*So it all started when I did a career profiling test in Year 11 at high school. They got everyone to do it and they, so I quite, always enjoyed maths and science, and then it came back, and it said, “Oh you should go into engineering.” (Julie, Site Engineer)*

Similarly, women and men shared a commonality in why they sought employment at large construction companies: to build diverse and iconic projects in Australia and overseas.

*Probably the most satisfying thing about construction that doesn't really exist in a lot of other fields is that, when I finish a project, it doesn't get filed away and forgotten about; it stands there for 50 years. It's still something that you take pride in. (Ronald, Site Engineer)*

## **1.1 CAREERS FOR WOMEN: CAREERS FOR MEN**

Despite women and men entering construction for the same reason, career pathways in construction remain highly gendered. Different career paths in construction also offer different opportunity, or progression capital, to move into senior leadership roles. For the most part, those who deliver projects successfully have more chance of progressing than those who do not. To deliver projects, professionals usually follow a construction career path that is modelled on the traditional project hierarchy - site engineer to project engineer to site manager/construction manager and finally to project leader. There are other career pathways into leadership, but this is the norm and it offers the best opportunity for progression into leadership roles. This is not the only career path in construction, there are others but once established on a career path, movement between career pathways appears sticky and challenging to navigate.

Women in construction roles reported that their career progression operated at different speeds; few enjoying a smooth rise into management. One of the issues impacting women's advancement was that they were directed by managers away from the traditional

construction career pathways that operated on construction sites, into peripheral construction roles design and commercial in head office.

*Quality. Environmental, Safety HR and all that's obviously...paperworky roles. Girls always get put on the paperwork roles because they're good at paperwork. And we are. But I don't want a job just because I'm good at it; I want a job that's gonna challenge me. (Nicole, Estimating Manager)*

Women, who followed this direction, found that their enjoyment and progression was undermined. While women, who resisted and stayed on the traditional construction career pathway, found that they were appointed opportunities on the site that did not aid their progression either and gave them little opportunity to showcase their skills in front of senior management.

*I have had a lot of opportunities and limited issues but I suspect that this is because my career path was design. Other women who started at the same time as me and wanted to be construction managers, site managers etc. They have not had the same experience or opportunities. They have been continually been shepherded towards traditional design roles and contract admin. (Fay, Project Manager)*

Indeed, women who felt most satisfied with their career progression were those who had entered and stayed in their specialised areas such as design.

## 1.2 ASSUMING WOMEN'S CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

Social norms outside of construction appear to be one reason why women are directed into these career paths by their manager. There is an expectation by managers that women will not have the capacity to combine construction work with family.

*I'd like a project director that actually understands what I do and values it, and understands the experience that I have and the capacity that I have and will put me up for the next role regardless of me having three kids. (Gail, Commercial Manager)*

*Every year my HR manager would cross paths with me in the tea room just before my contract review and say, "When are you thinking of getting married and having babies?" Every year, right, before my contract review..... I could see this, this series of women being employed as cadets, and then just disappearing. (Sinead, Project Manager)*

Women's capability may be another reason women are delegated lesser valued opportunities or directed into 'peripheral' career paths. As the construction norm, men's capabilities are assumed and go without question. By contrast, women's capabilities are a point of discussion and even question.

*I pick the guys up on their assumption of whether she can handle it or - or she's at the age of having a child or you know she has got a child. They don't know what her circumstances are. They don't know that she's the breadwinner and she's got a partner*

*at home and they're just making the assumption. It's not even unconscious. I feel like really smart, good women get sidelined. (Paris, Senior Manager)*

Women's performance often needed to be better, not equal to men to be considered capable of undertaking a construction role.

*The whole gender thing gives me the shits as well sometimes because ... above me, they're like pushing me to, "Oh yeah, more women, more women." ...Just because she's female ... If she's crap, then I'm not gonna put her on because this guy might be better. But, if she's really good and better than him, then I'm gonna give her the job. (Raymond, Senior Manager)*

To prove their capability women are often asked to do extra work in areas that do not contribute to their progression and simultaneously being denied opportunities that allow them to shine in front of managers and decision makers. For example, even in graduate programs necessary skills are prescribed and clearly mapped out, young women were expected to complete extra work that was often administrative, to prove their capability and skill level. Achieving the transparent skill set was not enough for women; they had to go over and above.

*Even on my last project, they'd often ask me to do extra like jobs here and there. At the time, I was like really pissed-off 'cause I'd be like, "I'm so busy." "Can't you get someone like the receptionist to do it?" (Evelyn, Commercial Manager)*

### 1.3 PROVING YOURSELF WITH EACH NEW LINE MANAGER

The project nature of construction means that each time a woman moves onto a new project, they will have a new line manager. With each new line manager, women are expected to prove their capability over and over again. This practice frustrated women as they felt their career advancement was built upon shifting sands. Any protest women made to this practice was met with resistance and labelled as unreasonable.

*I was telling [my line manager] one day about how I'd spoken to the project director and informed him that I had actually done construction management, and had years of experience, and was his highest educated, youngest, only female [position] manager. Terry got all flustered; he couldn't believe that I spoke with such aggression to the project director. He also said that that I have such a sense of entitlement; that I believe that I'm owed something. And I said to him, "No, I don't believe that I'm owed something but, when the project director doesn't think that I've got the basic qualifications, I felt it necessary to point out to him that, yes, I did have a degree in construction management and a master's degree in construction law, and that I had experience." (Gail, Commercial Manager)*

In effect, the types of opportunities granted to women and the exposure these opportunities bring in front of senior management appear to be different to the opportunities granted to men. These practices, over the course of a career, undermine women's enjoyment and career success and contribute to women's retention levels and lack of representation in leadership.

The way talent is informally managed in construction underlines this problem and it is where I will turn to next.

## **SUMMARY**

- Women in operational construction roles reported that their career progression operated at different speeds; few enjoying a smooth rise into management.
- Women and men were given unequal access to opportunities in their career and this impacted their career enjoyment and advancement.
- Despite sharing the same reasons for choosing a career in construction, once in the door, gendered career pathway norms directed women into peripheral career pathways that undermined their career enjoyment and advancement.
- Men's capability as construction professionals were assumed, but women's capacity and capability was questioned. Women needed to be better, not equal to men to be considered capable of undertaking a construction role and they had to prove this over and over again with each new line manager.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Deconstruct traditional norms associated with career pathways and progression.
- Change the practice and narrative: recognise, celebrate and reward agile and diverse career paths.
- Develop and support in-house construction training, shadowing and role sharing for employees to move between career pathways.
- Clearly, articulate the different career pathways in construction. Educate. Enforce.
- Investigate the pathway to progression within the firm and clearly articulate this to employees. Educate. Enforce.

## 2. TALENT MANAGEMENT

Young women entering construction were strategic about their tertiary education choice; many completed double degrees to allow them the opportunity to leave construction if it did not meet their expectations. Young women were also strategic about the companies they chose to apply for; the visible presence of women working and holding positions of power in the company was a draw card for them.

*I did choose [company name] because I could see that women were being employed there and I could see that they were involved, they were actually making it in the organisation. (Sinead, Project Manager)*

### 2.1 GRADUATE PREPAREDNESS

According to young graduates, construction companies graduate recruitment campaigns offer much; an exciting range of jobs and opportunities including working with the company overseas. No participants specifically reported that they felt they had been oversold opportunities, however.

*I've liked that it was an international company as well 'cause I do want to work overseas. And then, yeah, just the range of jobs that they had and the way that they run their like interview process and everything; they get you really excited. They've definitely got their marketing down. (Jane, Site Engineer)*

## 2.2 DIFFERENT ENTRIES INTO CONSTRUCTION

Women and men appear to gain entry into companies through different means. On average, female participants applied formally for roles in construction companies. By comparison, male participants were introduced to the company or put forward for a role through their informal networks. There was one clear exception: women returning from parental leave who used their informal networks to aid their return to construction.

*I was referred to the job by my brother-in-law who was working for the company at the time - the same line that I'm working - and I got interviewed. (Anthony, OHS Manager)*

*I basically applied for like 50 jobs and maybe went to five interviews. (Jane, Site Engineer)*

All candidates were interviewed formally however but getting 'a foot in the door' did appear to influence the formal recruitment process. Introductions were important in confirming candidates 'cultural fit' and suitability. Informal referrals are not unusual in construction; indeed they are encouraged by companies and even financially rewarded. In sectors with a large gender imbalance, practices of informal referrals act to maintain a homogenous social and do little to build gender diversity.

## 2.3 COMPANY RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

In recent years, construction companies have made strides in remodelled their graduate recruitment processes with a focus on eliminating gender bias in recruitment to enhance the numbers of women graduates. Despite this, graduate recruitment still remains heavily focused on traditional education pipelines –construction management and engineering (civil and structural) tertiary degrees – rather than broader built environment, business or engineering degrees per se.

Aside from graduate recruitment, company external recruitment practices appear to be quite inconsistent; varying in form and format from interview to interview. For example, some participants reported being interviewed once by a solo senior manager, while others were interviewed three times by a panel for their role. Interview questions also appeared to vary depending on the candidate's gender.

*A really interesting question that I asked was "You're a female in a male-dominated industry. What if some big, tough guy on-site decides to put you in your place and doesn't want to listen to you? How would you deal with that situation?" I did not expect a question like that. It was a bit of an eye-opener. I know that I'm female in a male-dominated industry but for like two men to like ask me that in an interview I was like, "Oh? Okay ..." I think we know it's male-dominated but .... Would they have asked that to a male? (Lily, Site Engineer)*

There is a strong pull within recruitment practices for candidates to marry with a 'cultural fit' of the company and sector, with little reflection as to its effect on diversity. Cultural fit is coded male in construction. Therefore, meeting the criteria of cultural fit is easier for male candidates than female candidates. Women who can "handle it", "knock about girls" who are "driven, tough...resilient" appear to have more chance of being recruited than women that do not adhere to this form. "Handling it" appears to mean handling sexism and the reminder of your gender difference on a frequent basis with no fuss or bother. That is not to say men walk freely untouched by these criteria of cultural fit; however for the most part men are often assumed a fit without having to prove otherwise.

## 2.4 INTERNAL RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

In the case of internal recruitment, participants reported that they were more likely to be allocated a role than applying for an internal position. In part, because most internal roles, especially those associated with recruitment onto construction projects were often not internally advertised.

*I have had five jobs in [the company] and none was every advertised. (Freddie, construction professional)*

In most cases, the HR departments appear to facilitate the appointment of personnel; however, the power to appoint is situated with the operational managers or project leaders, the majority who are men. Formal HR processes such as advertising positions internally were

habitually by-passed by senior managers who allowed project leaders to 'pick their teams' and 'take their teams with them'. Free from transparency, this practice strengthened loyalty between employees and managers but also intensified the need for employees to develop informal networks and to form strong strategic alliances with those in management roles, predominantly men. Indeed, given the gendered nature of construction, informal networks were predominantly male and often closed off to women. Women found it extremely difficult to access these informal male networks or form strategic alliances with male superiors and were therefore much less likely to utilise them.

*I mentioned to someone that I was going to move back to Brisbane and they said, "You're a really good guy. We'll find you, I know people. I'll get you a gig." I don't think I've ever applied for a job since the very first job I had. In fact, I could tell you that I have never applied for a job other than the one I got the week after I left school.*

*(Charlie, Senior Manager)*

*In the four years I've been here in senior roles, we've only once hired someone no one knew.... the executives are the worst offenders of that ...They are the worst offenders of all. (Paris, Senior Manager)*

## 2.5 COMPANY PROMOTION PRACTICES

It was difficult for participants to pin down how promotions take place in their company and what they have to do to achieve one. Formal performance review processes appear to translate into salary and bonus reviews rather than promotions. A lack of transparency around how progression occurs strengthens the need for employees to form strategic alliances with senior managers and project leaders, who are predominantly men. Strategic alliances and sponsorships provide employees with access to opportunities, advocacy and career guidance.

*Going up the ranks...it's still pretty hard because it's still the club and I'm still not getting access or I'm condescended to or I have to do three times as hard or - but no one really talks about it because you don't want to whinge about it. (Rowena, Project Engineer)*

*I just hang off Angus's coat tails....I haven't to date requested to go onto a project... I think your performance speaks for itself but can very easily be overlooked if, if the right people aren't speaking to the right people... It's about having someone on the team who, you know, trusts in your ability and gives you the opportunity to perform. Angus was very good at pushing my case forward through the required management levels in order to get that job change. (Christopher, Project Engineer)*

These strategic alliance and sponsorships were closed off to most women. Notably, two women in senior roles recognised that their career progression had benefitted from the

sponsorship by a senior male leader at different points in their career. Interestingly, most male participants described being sponsored but failed to recognise it and instead, put their career progression down to hard work and talent.

## SUMMARY

- The visible presence of women working and holding positions of power in the company is a draw card for women.
- Women and men entered the construction industry differently. Women relied on formal processes of entry and men relied on informal introductions or referrals. Despite the existence of formal interview processes, the informal introduction aided men's entry and recruitment into construction.
- A lack of transparency around recruitment and promotion practices strengthens the need for employees to develop strategic alliances with managers, most of whom are male. These strategic alliances are often closed off to women.
- Male sponsorship and the ability to form strategic alliances are critical for career progression in construction. Men were given greater access to these than women.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make company and project recruitment and promotion processes and criteria more transparent and consistent.
- Advertise internal roles and make project recruitment processes more transparent.
- Challenge the norm of Project Leaders 'picking their team' and 'taking their team with them'. Shake it up and share the talent/knowledge around.
- Set strong gender targets at all levels of recruitment and leadership. Address the issue of 'fairness' within the company to avoid resistance and notions of 'unfair advantage'.
- Broaden the recruitment criteria.
- Assess the values and practices that underpin 'cultural fit' and decide if this is the criteria the company should be recruiting against.
- Conduct recruitment drives to attract women and men, not from the traditional pipeline. Provide construction training.
- Introduce formal sponsorship programs for women – particularly low to middle level - within the organisation. Women shadow men/women in key positions.

### 3. CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGEMENT

On construction projects, employee's value is demonstrated through their adherence to rigid work practices that include long hours, presenteeism and total availability. Participants reported working on average 55-80 hours per week during the life of a project; ramping up 80-100 hours towards project completion. Saturday work is now the norm and Sunday work and out of hours, used as catch up time.

*People have these kind of perceptions that this is how you do it. This is the way we've always done it. And you have to work 12 hours a day or else you, you could be doing more, because that's how they did it. They could do it then everybody else should be willing to do it. (Rowena, Project Engineer)*

*No-one has ever pulled me up and directly said, "What hours are you working?" but you get a lot of emails at like nine, 10 o'clock at night, on Saturdays and Sundays. And I sort of feel like, if you can't get to those emails within a certain period of time, then that is noted. (Gail, Commercial Manager)*

*I worked three weeks straight, 14, 15, 16-hour days. It's expected and it's known so you can sort of prepare yourself for that in the lead-up to it. (Christopher, Project Engineer)*

Long hours result from a combination of industry work norms – presenteeism and total availability – and work load. Participants expressed frustration that there was no letup in their work load or hours.

*“There’s always more you can do.” (Jane, Site Engineer)*

On construction projects, project leaders perform and enforce these work practices often in response to project targets: time and cost.

*Our biggest issue - and this again is an industry thing - is the project lifecycle.*

*Everything’s rosy at the beginning of a project. Things are pretty ugly towards the last 20 per cent of a project when you’re under cost pressure, you’re under time pressure, the client wants this, that and the other. (Georgina, HR Manager)*

In most cases, the faster a project is completed, the more profitable the project. Companies also offer project leaders financial incentives to complete projects early; acting to strengthen work practices. Construction projects are characterised by a heavy reliance on people, paper and physical presence. Slow uptake of technology, often because it is seen as a project not company cost, acts to reinforce long hours and presenteeism.

### **3.1 INCOMPATIBILITY WITH FAMILY COMMITMENTS**

Within this realm, there is little accommodation for social or caring roles outside of construction. As a result, women who continue to carry the greatest caring responsibilities in our society, are often with the responsibility to negotiate and execute the balance between a

construction career and family. Due to rigid work norms, women feel they are often left with a choice between a career in construction or a family.

*You've got to almost make a decision between your career and your family. (Ben, Senior Project Engineer)*

*With small children, I won't be able to do the role that I'm doing because you require; you're on call all the time. So I just, yeah, that's another thing that I wish would change because I love what I do. I love my role but at the moment, it just doesn't account for it. (Julie, Site Engineer)*

Parental leave is also primarily seen as an issue for women and operates as a major barrier to women's retention. Although formal parental leave policies are in place within large construction firms, on project sites individual women reported that they had to strategize and negotiate their departure, return and career 'survival'.

For some project leaders, parental leave is viewed as a resource and actual cost to the individual construction project. In other words, women experience resentment from their colleagues if the project is charged with their parental leave cost and their role is not 'backfilling' during their parental but instead is added to the workload of their colleagues. In this environment, there appears to be little recognition of the cost on women's pay equity and career progression.

*I had three kids but, by the time that process of being pregnant for a remuneration review and then being on maternity leave, six or seven years had gone by. Came back and I'm still doing the same job as the blokes or anyone that hadn't been away. But I'd missed six [pay] reviews ... I had had no increase, essentially, in six years. And then I've had 20 per cent increase in the last two years. I've received bonuses for the last couple of years but, when I was pregnant and on maternity leave, that was ... no. (Sinead, Project Manager)*

There also appears to be little recognition or memory that site team members do step out away from projects for periods of time and are covered by their colleagues with no resistance; to work on tenders, for example. Instead, formal flexible work arrangements including part-time work, shared roles or staged returns from parental leave are routinely resisted or denied on construction sites as they fall outside of the norm. In recent years, construction companies have been actively trying to challenge this norm; piloting and trailing different ways of project resourcing that encourages flexible work arrangements.

### **3.2 ADJUSTING AMBITIONS**

Young women observe the difficulty other women face negotiating parental leave and family commitments and the impact work practices have had on the personal lives of male leaders and adjust their ambitions accordingly.

*So I'm 27-years-old now. I wanted to be a senior project engineer by 30. That was a goal. Now I'm a site engineer. When I started engineering in that undergrad position interview, I told the project manager that I wanted to be a project manager one day. I want to do that except I just feel like having a baby would put a career stop to that. So as long as I get to a senior project engineer role that would be good. (Dorothy, Site Engineer)*

### 3.3 SAVING YOUR MARRIAGE

Some young men also recognised that personal relationships are a common casualty in construction. They attempt to approach their construction career differently; by shifting from contractor to client later in their career.

*The old school 'this is how we're doing it - we're gonna work you into the ground' and, you just look at everyone's personal lives outside of work...where their wives have divorced them or they hate 'em. I guess the industry's known for wrecking lives... And it's no surprise. (Toby, Foreman)*

Rigid work practices adhered to on construction sites fortified men's role as breadwinner, making it difficult for men to step up as carers or indeed fathers. Most men, even with a stay at home wives, acknowledged that their personal relationship and health were areas that needed improvement. Added to this, the majority of participants – women and men – reported very poor work life balance. Existing work norms on construction projects do little to

aid wellbeing and work life balance and result in high levels of anxiety, stress, fatigue and personal relationship breakdown.

*I do what the boys do but then I go home and I do what their wives do as well. (Nicole, Estimating Manager)*

*I'm sure partners are always gonna say it could be better. I've learned to not take it home with me. Just, I've learned to switch off and not ... yes, I still worry there are periods of the job where you have a bad sleep for a couple of days in a shitty pattern until you get something resolved... You've gotta be able to, at some point, forget about it. And not through drinking two bottles of red or anything else. That's more of a personal coping mechanism or strategy you either develop or you have a heart attack. (Alan, Site Manager)*

As acknowledged earlier, construction companies are recognising the creeping work hours and the impact existing work norms are having on talent productivity, health and wellbeing. Most participants were eager for work practices on sites to change although participants were also concerned that moves to improve flexibility would create work environments that were not agile enough to ramp up when needed and deliver construction projects.

### 3.3 SPACE INVADERS

Participants recognised that the construction industry has become more accustomed to women working in the sector; this is evident in part by the reduction in porn and strip shows on construction sites.

*When I got in the industry 13 years ago, it was a lot different but it was coming to the end of that very ... it is very male-dominated and it still is but, you know, you can't have your toolboxes with girlie magazines and all that open now. And stuff like that. There's no place in the industry for that anymore, which is a good thing. (Paul, Project Manager)*

*It's been a big, big improvement. 12 years ago...my very first construction site. On a Friday, I'd be the only person left in the office because they would bring the strippers in and the form workers had set up a special platform stage for the strippers. The whole joint reeked of pot and alcohol. I'd be trying to work away, and every now and then I'd hear a, "Yeah!" 10 minutes later, "Yeah!" Yeah. She was obviously reaching a high point of her performance. (Gail, Commercial Manager)*

Despite the recognition of change, young women were startled by the overt attention they received from male workers and colleagues when they first arrived onto the site. Women also reported that they were not prepared for the social isolation felt from repeatedly being the only woman in the team, or on the project, or in the meeting.

*When I first started, I was like, "Wow! There's a lot of guys." I was 23.... so I remember my first month on-site and it was quite overwhelming. [L]ike you'd go out there and guys would just be checking you out and I was like, "Okay," Like you're not just walking past a building site. You're on that site and people stare, looking at you. (Dorothy, Site Engineer)*

Women reported being habitually reminded both subtly and overtly of their difference and gender. These reminders range from repeated 'paper cut' size reminders of their difference – being called 'a girl' or excluded from meetings or being asked to do certain administrative tasks – to more overt reminders – sexist graffiti, sexual harassment and discrimination, sexist comments - that reinforced the construction site as a male space. A tolerance of sexism continues in construction.

*There's heaps of, there's a few dick drawings out on site. I couldn't care less. Like ...I think if you're not liking the dick drawing, then you're not really meant to be here... (Angela, Site Engineer)*

*The banter's important to join-in on. In the office. If you can't join-in on that, then you're just a female and you're just out of it. (Lily, Site Engineer)*

*The other thing is that companies take the team to lunch or drinks. It's always very male-focused. If I was a male administrator, they would ask me and the male engineers to lunch or drinks on a Friday afternoon. But, because you're a female, they don't tend to even remember you. (Poppy, Contracts Administration)*

The acceptance and normalcy of these sexist practices make women feel like they are intruders in a male space. Over time these reminders frustrate and exhaust women; who for the most part only want to be treated as construction professionals not adornments, tokens or something special. Sexist practices did not sit well with some men on site either, yet few publicly spoke up against them or indeed acted to address them.

*I can understand speaking to some of the girl grads that it can be pretty daunting. And I think, sometimes a bit socially exclusive. (Gavin, Supervisor)*

### 3.4 UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

Construction careers remain highly competitive. Actions and initiatives to address gender equality have been met with some resistance, from women and men. Women are concerned that gender diversity initiatives will only make it harder for them to be accepted. Their concern is not without reason; some men view existing construction practices as gender neutral and fair, and gender diversity initiatives as providing women with an unfair advantage.

*I agree with policies like not to discriminate. 100 per cent agree you shouldn't discriminate. But I then don't think you should have a contradictory policy that says we should recruit or employ to get a diverse mix of our community and, by default, discriminate against someone who's better fit for the company or better experienced... I completely disagree with discrimination but it was discrimination in the other way*

*whereas, just because I was male, I never had those same opportunities or possibilities given to me..I think you need to have an even playing field for everyone. (Shaun, Planner)*

*Male or female that race was sort of run and won 20 years ago. No-one cares anymore if you're male or female but people do care about, you know, it's Australia; we don't like people getting special treatment. (Freddie, Services Manager)*

Resentment and further exclusion of women result from the extent of this reasoning to undermine women's enjoyment and success within the construction industry.

## SUMMARY

- Existing practices associated with construction project set up, resourcing and management act to undermine women's retention and men and women's wellbeing and work life balance.
- Rigid work norms leave women with a choice between construction career or family. Despite formal parental leave policies, on project sites individual women often had to strategize and negotiate their departure, return and career 'survival'.
- Young women adjust their ambitions to accommodate the inflexible work environment. Young men plan how they will avoid relationship breakdown.
- A tolerance of sexism continues to operate in construction leaving women exhausted and frustrated.
- Due to the hypercompetitive nature of construction, gender equity policies are often met with resistance and seen as giving women unfair advantage.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Responsibility for gender diversity needs to be allocated and owned by those in operational roles who have power. In other words, the responsibility and execution for gender diversity should not sit with HR. Attach gender diversity and employee wellbeing aims to operational managers and project leader's bonus/salary.
- Educate and inform operation managers and project leaders about gender, gender diversity and employee wellbeing. Address the issue of 'fairness', unfair advantage.
- Set up projects with 'flexible' work practices in mind. Plan for flexibility, parental leave, wellbeing, job sharing, standardised hours, removal of Saturday work. Talk about it. ENFORCE IT.
- Stop rewarding and promoting excessive hours and 'shaming' those who do not comply. Monitor fatigue and wellbeing.
- Consider the impact of 'target' programs on workforce well-being.
- Lead from the front on flexibility – celebrate stories of managers that work flexibility and have agile careers.
- For women, it is important to see other women in senior ranks and be placed with other women construction professionals on site.
- Demonstrate 'no tolerance' to sexism – sexist drawings, wording, behaviour – in the work place (including construction sites).

- Endorse parental leave practices 'on the ground'. Introduce the option for staged return to work for parents.
- Add a gender impact statement/lens to new and existing policies and practices, to recognise that sometimes practices and policies have unintended gendered consequences. For example:
  - Parental leave costs to be borne by the company, not the project to avoid backlash and discrimination.
  - Technology cost to be borne by the company not the project to avoid paper, presence and people work practices.
- Put gender on the tender. Set clear expectations on the supply chain – architects, planners, engineering firms etc.

## PART THREE: CONCLUSION

This research project aimed to emphasize the precise structural and normative dimensions that act as obstacles in women's construction careers. By using the work of Andrew Dainty, Barbara Bagilhole and Richard Neale, the research was able to draw a base line and reflect on how the barriers to women's careers have changed or not in 20 years.

The research found that despite the focus on gender diversity by large construction companies, talent management, career pathway norms and construction management norms act in the way of women's attraction, retention and advancement in construction.

This research found that graduate recruitment aside, entry processes into construction lack transparency and favour informal introductions and male networks. Additionally, the criterion for recruitment remains narrow and the processes informal and lacking transparency. Rigid and gendered career pathways and a lack of transparency around promotions operate to undermine women's advancement and career pathway. Women's choices and ambition erode with increased exposure to the inflexible and exclusionary work practices. The repeated questioning of women's capability and capacity and the lack of access to a fulfilling career that is agile and exciting reduces women's construction career appetite and interest. Taken together, these stages accumulate and undermine women's interest, enjoyment and success in construction.

This report also finds that men are not faring well from existing construction practices either. Construction practices - presenteeism, total availability, long hours and heavy workloads – are impacting on men’s health, well-being and personal lives. If the sector is serious about attracting and retaining the best talent – female and male - it needs to address taken-for-granted work practices and norms.

Overall, the experiences of women in Australia in 2017 look similar to the experiences of women in the UK in 1997; but there are a few differences. The first difference is that the case for gender diversity is now better understood and accepted and construction companies are actively responding to the barriers to gender equity. The second difference is despite the introduction of company policies in the last 20 years focused on parental leave, flexibility and well-being, in practice the tires have not hit the road and these initiatives have some way to go before they are considered mainstream business practices.

Women’s underrepresentation in construction is often understood as a ‘pipeline issue’ – a problem with women not choosing a career in construction. This might be the case, but to shift the gendered face of construction, it is up to the construction sector to attract women into the industry. For this to happen, the construction industry needs to change. Industry leaders need to understand how existing construction work practices undermine gender diversity and women’s inclusion in the sector and change them. By maintaining the status quo, the sector is denying itself of talent and maintaining a work environment that is unfair to women and unhealthy for all.

## 20 YEARS ON....SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### 1997 United Kingdom

Research by Andrew Dainty, Barbara Bagilhole & Richard Neale

#### BARRIERS FOR WOMEN

- ✓ Women were unprepared for the exclusionary nature of construction & oversold opportunities by companies
- ✓ Women experienced longer tenure in roles
- ✓ Women were denied opportunities to advance their career

### 2017 Australia

- ✓ Women were given unequal access to opportunities in their career
- ✓ Women were directed into peripheral career paths that undermined their enjoyment and progression
- ✓ Women's capacity and capability was continually questioned

#### GENDERED EFFECT

- ✓ Slow career progression for women
- ✓ Women were frustrated with the lack of opportunity & slow progression
- ✓ Women's confidence and aspirations were reduced
- ✓ Differential and slow career progression for women
- ✓ Women are frustrated and exhaustion from proving capability and capacity
- ✓ Reduced career enjoyment and advancement for women

1997 United Kingdom

2017 Australia

## BARRIERS FOR WOMEN

- ✓ Informal organisational talent management
- ✓ Gender bias and micro-aggressions towards women
- ✓ Employee's individual future aspirations

- ✓ Informal organisational talent management and strategic alliances advantage men
- ✓ Recruitment and project recruitment based on informal networks and 'cultural fit'
- ✓ Recruitment and promotion practices informal, narrow and inconsistent

## GENDERED EFFECT

- ✓ Women had difficulty negotiating recruitment and progression process
- ✓ Women's disillusionment grew with their exposure to industry
- ✓ Women left the industry

- ✓ Men used informal networks to negotiate the recruitment process; these networks were often closed to women
- ✓ Women are frustrated and exhaustion from proving capability and capacity
- ✓ Women's disillusionment grew with their exposure to industry
- ✓ Maintenance of the gender status quo in leadership roles

## 1997 United Kingdom

## 2017 Australia

## BARRIERS FOR WOMEN

- ✓ Hyper-competitive masculine work environment
- ✓ Rigid work practices
- ✓ Women's individual characteristics and circumstances

- ✓ Hyper-competitive masculine work practices
- ✓ Parental leave: policy in place but poor execution
- ✓ Tolerance of sexism
- ✓ Resistance to gender diversity policies

## GENDERED EFFECT

- ✓ Women made a choice between family and career
- ✓ Exclusion and bias towards women

- ✓ Women adjusted their ambition and left or went to a less satisfying role to accommodate care responsibilities
- ✓ Men and women suffered poor work life balance and wellbeing
- ✓ Women grew frustrated and exhausted by sexism they experienced

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