



THE  
**NAWIC**  
JOURNAL  
2024

A special thank you to our national sponsors, whose continued dedication strengthens our initiatives on a broader scale. Your belief in our vision empowers us to create meaningful experiences and opportunities for our members and the communities we serve.



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In 1995, NAWIC Australia was founded in Melbourne, on Wurundjeri land of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to the traditional owners of this land and waterways, as well as elders, past, present and emerging. We extend this respect to all indigenous peoples of this continent and its adjacent lands, recognising their cultures as the oldest continuous living cultures in human history. We recognise the deep spiritual connections and relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with community, as well as the lands, oceans, waterways, air and sky. We acknowledge that the land we live, work and play on always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



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# ABOUT

## NAWIC



At the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) our vision is an equitable construction industry where women fully participate. Led by a team of passionate employees and volunteers, we all strive to help champion and empower women in the construction and related industries to reach their full potential. With Chapters in every State and Territory, we are also part of a global network with organisations in the United States, New Zealand, Canada and more.

NAWIC provides a forum for its members to meet and exchange information, ideas and solutions. We also offer our members an opportunity to expand personal and business networks, maintain awareness of industry developments, improve skills and knowledge and contribute to other women in the construction industry.

Our mission is to drive changes that will aid in the increased recruitment, retention and further vocational development of women within all facets of the industry through advocacy and lobbying for change, education for individuals, companies and the industry as a whole and connection, celebration and support for all women in construction.

The NAWIC Journal platforms incredible women, men and businesses who are redefining the industry and actively changing the culture in construction and related industries. Get ready to explore impactful articles, expert interviews, groundbreaking research and inspiring thought leadership pieces. The NAWIC Journal isn't just another magazine, it's a group of forward-thinkers, industry leaders and visionaries.

**#werisetgether**





# MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

CATHERINE KING



When we talk about the progress of women, we talk about the progress of Australia and the community as whole. Regardless of where we live, infrastructure impacts safety, access to opportunity, and agency over one's wellbeing. Significantly, it is an enabler for social and labour force participation, for example, through reduced commuting times and enhanced safety and security. It is vital to the Australian economy and the quality of life that we enjoy. When we talk about the progress of women, we talk about the progress of Australia.

As Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, I am heartened by the professionalism, drive, diversity and achievements of the NAWIC membership, which is creating essential change that will increase the recruitment, retention and training of women in construction. Helping women advance in society and in industry matters, because it is only when women are in the room that we get outcomes that consider us all.

I know that having women rising through the ranks of the infrastructure industry is leading to similar advancements for us all. It is important that this sector gets it right because infrastructure is essential to our way of life. Regardless of where we live, infrastructure impacts safety, access to opportunity, and agency over one's own life. It is an enabler for social and labour force participation, and it is vital to the Australian economy and the quality of life that we enjoy.

The construction industry and land transport infrastructure connects and enriches every Australian community, underpins our economy and society, and empowers our regions. The construction industry contributes seven per cent of GDP and employs almost one in ten of the working population. But women make up less than 12 per cent of that workforce.

12 per cent may be an improvement on times in the past, but there remains a long way to go.

This is a result of historic gender imbalance, insufficient pathways for women into the industry and a lack of strategies to attract and retain women. All challenges that this association is seeking to overcome. This engagement is more important than ever as the Australian Government, in collaboration with the states and territories, embarks on a process of reform that will support a more sustainable pipeline of investment and a productive and inclusive construction sector.

Setting the groundwork for this ambition, in November 2023 I released an Infrastructure Policy Statement that outlines the Australian Government's commitment to the strategic delivery of land transport projects in partnership with its stakeholders. Productivity and resilience, liveability, and sustainability, the three strategic themes contained in the Statement, will guide future investment decisions in nationally significant infrastructure and deliver programs, projects and infrastructure that touch the lives of every Australian.

We will contribute to national productivity by investing in infrastructure proposals that reduce road trauma, improves travel times, provide greater freight connectivity between communities and gateways, drives productivity, and supports the growth of regional Australia. Achieving this ambition requires a robust, diverse, skilled, inclusive, safe and productive construction sector that supports, and is reflective of, contemporary Australian society.

It is my expectation that state delivery partners and contractors will support and enable change in workplace culture to the extent that it increases the participation of women in the construction of projects co-funded by the Australian Government.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that the Australian Government's commitment to strategic infrastructure delivery, and its unequivocal support for increased productivity, diversity and inclusion in construction, particularly for women, come to fruition.

Finally, I want to thank each and every one of you for driving genuine change in the construction industry. For all the people you have supported, and for all the moments of resilience, determination and passion – you are inspiring generations to come.

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Local Governments



# NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON'S

## FOREWORD



The NAWIC Journal is always a great time to reflect on where we are as an association as members of an industry and reinvigorate for what is ahead. Although the impact of the pandemic feels truly subsided, the strength of our Chapters, National voice, industry engagement and membership, which is at an all-time high has exceeded our expectations. NAWIC members continue to thrive in an industry despite the continuing stagnant statistics (<14% Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023), we continue to thrive in an industry that has significant pressure to deliver a pipeline of work that is unprecedented.

NAWIC members know they are supported and empowered in our network, that we have got their back and are advocating at every corner. This connection, support network, is critical if we are to push for #morein24 to shift the stagnant percentages and the improvement of work conditions for all. With great goals, and substantial numbers, the delivery of plans by our exceptional volunteers and now 13 staff is continually at risk. So much so, the NAWIC Board has begun the significant process to future proof the association with a strategy plan update including a structural review. We have sourced experts to guide us on this implementation. Our priority is to keep members at the centre of all that we do. As current custodians of NAWIC we are keenly aware that the association's future requires work now to support the significant growth, and voice, of our members.

NAWIC has continued to be at the forefront of advocating for women's equal representation and advancement in the construction industry. In 2024, the association has intensified its efforts in influencing policy changes and addressing systemic barriers through various initiatives. NAWIC's engagement with Government bodies, industry leaders and influential stakeholders has resulted in increased awareness and commitment to foster an inclusive and supportive environment for women in construction. NAWIC specifically this year progressed with a National Advocacy Campaign, guided by experts, plus a member survey, our Board and Chapter leads came together in early 2024 to refine our advocacy priorities which we believe will shift the dial with real discussions at all levels. These priorities are: 1. Equitable Facilities, 2. Women in Leadership, 3. Increasing the Pool, 4. Gender Pay Gaps, 5. Women in Trades, 6. Sexual Harassment, 7. Retention. I am pleased to note the first campaign for Equitable Facilities successfully provided the levers for all chapters to have discussions with Government leaders and industry bodies in your Parliament houses around the nation. We will continue to have these discussions as each advocacy priority campaign launches to get the attention it requires to have policy, procurement, and culture shifts. This is #morein24. We are grateful for these connections and



our seat at the table with the Australian Construction Industry Forum. A platform that has the ear of government and industry stakeholders, this quarterly forum meeting includes 23 other National Industry Associations for which NAWIC has found comrades in the journey to improving our industry for all. We connect, we action, we are continually engaged to comment for Government!

If members are at the heart of all we do, sponsors and industry partners are what keeps the wind in our sails. Our sponsors and partners understand the journey to a diverse, equitable and inclusive industry, and that it is best done together. NAWIC provide several leading programs – career advice, mentoring, Male Allies Program, leadership, and business support. Equally as important are our NAWIC grants, at National and Chapter level, providing that support to overcome barriers, and advance careers. We will continue to support our members in all avenues that we know contribute to empowered women in the industry. Part of the puzzle is speaking up and telling our stories, and this is why the NAWIC Journal, along with The Leaky Pipeline Podcast, NAWIC Couch, our newsletters and social media are especially important. This year's NAWIC Journal is another exceptional collation of NAWIC members sharing their journeys and lived experiences, and we hope you enjoy.

*Jennifer Gillett*

National Chairperson, NAWIC

# GENERAL MANAGER'S

## FOREWORD



In the world of construction there exists a battle—a quest, for diversity, fairness and inclusivity. The NAWIC Journal is a voice, amplifying the stories of women navigating the construction industry.

Going beyond just acknowledging the challenges faced by women, the NAWIC Journal sparks a call to action. Within its pages, it advocates for a shift towards inclusiveness challenging industry conventions and rooted biases. It urges individuals at all levels to appreciate diversity not only as an obligation but also as a strategic advantage. Whether in boardrooms or on construction sites it is up to all of us to promote a culture of respect, collaboration and equal opportunities.

This year, our team has worked hard implementing new initiatives, and I am excited to share some information about the hard work that has gone into them.

### Our Male Allies Program

We are pleased to launch the Male Allies Program. By rallying men in the industry to support gender diversity, this program aims to break down barriers and cultivate an environment where everyone feels they belong. It acknowledges that achieving gender equality necessitates involvement from all genders and empowers allies to leverage their privilege and influence for meaningful impact.

Through 5 online modules, the goal is to foster a community of supporters dedicated to building a future for women in the construction industry.

### Advocacy Priorities

As NAWIC has reached 13,000 members, it is time for us to start taking our advocacy efforts to the next level. We have come up with 5 Advocacy priorities to address the retention issues and also to increase the pool of Women in Construction. Our 5 Key priorities are: Women in Leadership, Women in Trades, Sexual Harassment, Gender pay gap and Equitable facilities.

I want to discuss our first priority that we launched this year – Equitable Facilities. Access to facilities goes beyond being an inconvenience; it stands as a human right. Yet many women working in construction face the reality of lacking access to amenities such as toilets. Our recent campaign highlights this issue urging us all to speak up for those who are affected. It challenges leaders in the industry and policymakers to prioritise providing accessible facilities at construction sites, acknowledging that the absence of facilities not only undermines workers' dignity and well-being but also perpetuates systemic inequalities. It calls for change and responsibility stressing that access to facilities is not about convenience but about human rights and social justice.

### Virtual Mentoring Program

The national mentoring program, will be a virtual group mentoring program that will focus on all women across the industry. 4 target groups will go through the program. These groups are: Women in Trades, Women in Senior roles, Women in middle management roles and Students/Apprentices and cadets. The aim is to provide free mentoring to help retain our women in the industry. By creating group mentoring we hope to create a community amongst the mentees and a safe place for them to come together, learn and share their experiences.

We honour the trailblazers and innovators driving progress in the industry. Through the NAWIC Awards, these champions are acknowledged for their dedication to promoting diversity, equity and inclusivity. From groundbreaking leaders breaking barriers to projects focusing on diversity and community involvement, these awards recognise individuals who embody advancement and positive change.

They act as sources of motivation reminding us of the importance of having a vision, persistence and working together towards a goal.

To our members, sponsors, volunteers and staff, your unwavering commitment drives our shared mission forward. Together we serve as representatives for change in the construction industry by promoting diversity and amplifying all voices. Your continued support and dedication are key to our efforts to build an equitable construction industry, where women fully participate.

*Lauren Fahey*

General Manager, NAWIC



# BOARD OF NATIONAL DIRECTORS



*Jennifer Gillett*

*National Chairperson*

Jennifer is an industry leader with more than twenty years of experience in delivering outstanding results for building and construction projects. She has served on numerous boards and committees such as NAWIC. Jennifer has also served on the QLD Government’s Ministerial Construction Council and Building Construction & Maintenance Category Council plus industry leadership and diversity committees for PCA, AIPM and the PCA Queensland Retirement Living Committee. Her leadership roles, particularly external to work, have provided her with better leadership skills, strategic development, and the joy of empowering others to achieve.



*Jessica Evans*

*National Vice Chairperson*

Jessica is a Relationship Manager at Taylor, with over 10 years of experience in the construction industry. She has developed strong expertise in business analytics, strategic planning, sales, negotiation and customer relationship management and is passionate about building long-term genuine partnerships. Jessica is actively involved in the not-for-profit sector, serving as a National Director for NAWIC and a Beneficiary Review Committee Member of the Property Industry Foundation (PIF), allowing her to contribute to the empowerment of women and support of homeless youth in the construction and property sectors.



*Loren Hickey*

*Chair of Finance & Audit*

With degrees in Civil Construction and Engineering, Marketing and Public Relations, Loren is a Precontracts Professional with close to 15 years experience in the construction industry, leading the teams that fuel the overall sustainability of some of Australia’s largest construction companies through the development and delivery of successful outcomes. She been an active member of NAWIC since 2015, and in 2022 she was appointed as a Board member of the Board of Professional Engineers of Queensland, and will soon complete her Master of Construction Law at the University of Melbourne.



# Kylie Judd

National Director

Kylie's love of technicality and project management led her to a career in construction management. With a background in Civil Engineering and Management, Kylie has fulfilled multidisciplinary roles including Site Engineer, Design Engineer and Quantity Surveyor across her career.

Throughout her career, Kylie has always been extremely passionate about the future of women in construction, and enjoys encouraging, motivating and mentoring within the community. She hopes that we can all play our part in working towards a more inclusive and empowered future for all.



# Gennifer Tan

National Director

Gennifer is a seasoned executive with more than 20 years of experience in the Real Estate, Infrastructure and Construction industries in Australia and Asia. She gained in-depth knowledge on governance, business and

project controls, business planning and reporting over a 15 year span with Lendlease. She gained superior negotiation and influencing abilities on the conversions of large-scale urban development projects at Grocon, and Oxford Property Group, including the Build to Rent Scheme proposed to Sydney Metro for the Pitt Street South Over Station Development.

# Susan Mercer

National Director

Susan has a wealth of experience in the property industry, with over 22 years of senior management, executive, operational, marketing and business development expertise in the property and construction sectors. She is an enthusiastic leader who has successfully facilitated company-wide strategic marketing and business development or project are achieved. She thrives on creating strategies to succeed, and welcomes the challenge to help businesses grow and be noticed.



# Lisa Martello

National Director

Lisa is a senior infrastructure delivery leader with over 15 years experience working on major rail and construction projects in the UK and Australia. Lisa is an elected Board Director with NAWIC, Chair of

the Diversity and Inclusion Portfolio, a Professional Mentor with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, co-founder of anti-racism podcast All Hands on Deck, and Founder and Creator of @catching\_bees. Lisa is particularly passionate about inclusive leadership, workplace culture and diversity. She is skilled at setting up and transforming teams for high performance and happiness, leading in complex stakeholder environments and optimising relationships between contractor and client.

# Lucinda Hartley

National Director

Lucinda is an award winning technology entrepreneur, professional keynote speaker and global expert in the future of work and cities. Named as one of Australia's 100 Most Influential Women by Australian Financial Review, and one of the Top 100 Most Influential Melbournians by The Age. Lucinda is a serial founder, best known for her role as co-founder of Neighbourlytics, where she spearheaded world leading technology for measuring urban life. Prior to this she co-founded CoDesign Studio, which delivered more than 100 neighbourhood improvement projects across Australia.



# Lyn O'Brien

National Director

Lyn has more than 15 years of expertise across pre construction and management roles. With hands-on experience spanning domestic and international markets, together with broad-reaching industry relationships,

she is focused on providing high-quality levels of delivery and building long-lasting client relationships. Lyn's collaborative leadership style ensures a consistent delivery of responsive outcomes for the unique requirements of every client and project.



# NAWIC'S FIVE PRIORITIES



At NAWIC we are dedicated to increasing the number of women entering the construction industry to **40% by 2030**. If we want to reach this target, we need more girls and women to see the industry as a place for them to thrive. We are also committed to focusing on their retention and career development. We know women are less likely to return to the industry after parental leave or see no future paths in leadership. NAWIC's Five Priorities aim to close these gaps and create an equitable construction industry where women full participate.

### Women in Leadership

*30% of Women in Leadership Positions in Top 20 Construction Companies by 2023.*

The lack of women within senior leadership positions directly relates to the lack of women who see themselves in them. Providing leadership training, mentoring programs, scholarships, KPI's and addressing bias will support their growth.

### Women in Trades

*Women Only Represent 3% of Those Working in Trades.*

We need to see better representation of women in the trades. Tradies are well paid and have real economic growth. Let's promote the trades to young women and girls and show university pathways.

### Sexual Harassment

*Zero Tolerance for Sexual Harassment on Worksites.*

We need to focus on prevention and enforcement on zero tolerance policies for sexual harassment. This includes education, anonymous reporting, legal aid for complainants, mandating induction topics and enforcing workplace termination policies for perpetrators.

### Appropriate Facilities

*Safe and Appropriate Facilities on all Worksites.*

There are often no safe or close toilets for women on remote worksites. We need Government recognition, and regulators to act on legislation by requiring companies to document their safe and equitable facilities.

### Pay Equity

*Close the Pay Gap in Construction.*

Women are paid 20% less than their male counterparts. We need to close the gender pay gap in construction by auditing businesses, advancing women into leadership roles and reconsidering remuneration of female roles.





# THE NAWIC MALE ALLIES PROGRAM

The NAWIC Male Allies Program is designed for men within the construction industry to understand and champion diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Partnering with Lysander, this self-paced, five digital module course aims to build awareness and knowledge – exploring key concepts, engaging in interactive learning experiences, and developing actionable plans to drive cultural change within their teams and organisations.

By participating in this program, learners will:

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of gender disparities, biases and challenges faced by women in male dominated industries
- Recognise the importance of male allyship in creating inclusive workplace culture and fostering diversity
- Acquire practical skills and strategies to support and advocate for female colleagues, challenge biases and promote gender inclusivity
- Explore individual and collective roles in fostering gender inclusion, including personal, social, societal and organisational levels
- Commit to implementing action to promote gender inclusivity, advocate for change and shift the culture.

With program structures for both individual and corporate pathways, there is an option for everyone!

### Individual Pathway

Our Individual Pathway is free of cost for NAWIC members. 100% online and self paces. This pathway is suitable to individuals who are ready to champion women in the workplace all in their own time.

### Corporate Pathway

Our Corporate Pathway is for employers and employees who want the full experience inclusive of a paid half-day in person forum. The face-to-face forum provides opportunities for interactive dialogue, reflective exercise and collaborative activities exploring lived experiences and current challenges.

The NAWIC Male Allies Program will be launching in the second half of 2024, and is exclusive to NAWIC members. You can find more information on our website.





# BUNNINGS TRADE & NAWIC

## WOMEN IN APPRENTICESHIPS AWARDS



In celebration of International Women's Day, Bunnings Trade and NAWIC collaborated to announce the Women in Apprenticeships Awards 2024 for the second year in a row! Aimed at supporting women in the trades early in their careers, the awards recognise 10 women currently completing an apprenticeship, or recently qualified granting them support packs worth over \$10,500 as well as ongoing professional and wellbeing support.

With over 2000 submissions this year, and a wide range of entries from each trade, our judging panel awarded 10 women on May 10th, and celebrated their win, presenting their prize packs and supporting their journey into the trades.

Jessica, Plumber – ACT

I'm a 26-year-old single mum of a two-year-old. I decided I wanted to make my way into plumbing before I found out I was pregnant, but after having my little girl it makes me work so much harder and want to be the best plumber I can be. I'm now in the second year of my apprenticeship, I'm passionate about all sectors of plumbing, and at Watertight we do a lot of maintenance and strata work. I really enjoy plumbing for the problem-solving aspect and really like to perfect each job I'm doing, I love when a customer is really happy with my work.



Shanica, Carpenter – WA

As a proud parent, I've witnessed my daughter's unwavering passion for her chosen trade since day one of her apprenticeship. Her dedication, hard work, and eagerness to learn have been truly inspiring. Every day she wakes up excited to tackle new challenges and expand her skills. She consistently goes above and beyond, seeking out additional learning opportunities and mentorship to improve her craft. Her commitment to excellence and her genuine love for the trade are evident in the quality of her work and the positive feedback she receives from her supervisors and colleagues.

Clara, Electrician – NSW

I have known Clara since she was a little girl. She has blossomed into a lovely mature levelheaded young woman. She has to travel 200kms each way for Tafe lessons and is the only female in her class. She gives her all in anything she does, and I admire that she crawls into roof and under floor spaces amongst spiders and other critters and does it all with a smile and positive attitude.



Parris, Landscaper – SA

Parris has a fantastic eye for detail and great work ethic. Straight away she showed us her ability to work independently, and problem solve tasks. Her first day with us she was on the sledgehammer demolishing a brick letter box and lifting barrows. Parris thrives on the physical work that landscaping throws up. We cannot speak highly enough of Parris and what a fantastic and valuable member she has become of our team.

Faiza, Electrician – VIC

It's almost a taboo for women to be a tradesperson in Pakistan and I didn't know that women could become one. So, when I came to Australia and found out it's possible, I started as an adult apprentice and needless to say I'm loving every bit of it, even though I am the only woman on my current site and only (and oldest) woman in class. I wish to be a role model for other women to join the construction industry and leave their mark on crucial projects transforming lives of Australians.





Victoria, Carpenter – NT

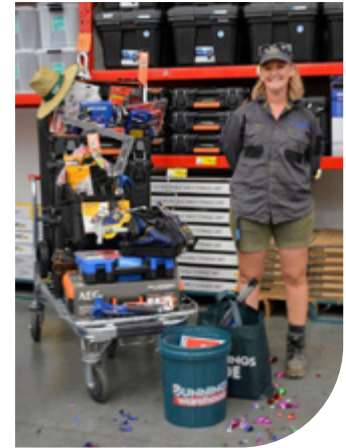
For as long as I can recall, I have wanted to be an Electrician. Raising three beautiful children, a husband working long hours in remote areas, my dreams were placed on hold for many years, but now it's time for my career, and I finally started my electrical apprenticeship in 2023. For years, many trades have been seen as 'a man's job', and i have a dream to be able to work with a passionate team of 'tradie ladies' offering a unique service to the many women in the community who would love the option of electrical works with 'the feminine touch'.

Jade, Carpenter – NSW

From the moment Jade started a mature-age apprenticeship, her enthusiasm was immediately evident. Her infectious energy has revitalised the time, and she has demonstrated a passion for learning the trade. Now almost in her third year, Jade embodies the spirit of a dedicated apprentice, she's an incredibly quick learner who is always eager to do any task and her meticulous attention to detail sets her apart.

Tabitha, Carpenter – TAS

My name is Tabitha, and I am a Carpenter apprentice and mother of two young children. At 33 I took a chance at having a second career after time off to be there for my kids. I've always loved getting on the tools and it didn't take long for that to turn into a fascination for sustainable building and natural materials. Now that passion has led me to take on Passive House Certification and Green Home training during the second year of my apprenticeship. I feel that it's really empowering for women, and mums, to be seen in the construction industry as we have so much to bring that can benefit our employers and their clients. I am so proud to be an example to other young girls like my daughter, who now thinks it's totally normal for a woman to be a carpenter.



Stefania, Painter – VIC

I'm a third-year apprentice painter, and I love my trade. All the current painters have been so supportive, patient and have encouraged me to challenge myself. Their belief makes me believe in my capabilities, which I have found difficult in the past. I love learning new things every day, and the people there have inspired me to be more curious. I'm now never afraid to ask questions not only in the trade, but in everyday life.



Talitha, Carpenter – VIC

Talitha is a single mother of five who is passionate about the career she has started. Her positive, determined approach is a role model. She gets up at 4am six-days a week, travels two hours to work, learns and applies new skills, travels two-hours home in time to prepare dinner, help with homework, and fulfil other mum duties. Her children support her, leaving little notes of encouragement, which she takes to work. Her dream is to be a site supervisor and build their own family home.



# INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

In the evolving environment of the construction industry, NAWIC is helping to lay the foundation for a new generation of builders and thinkers. One exciting project is the creation of a Stage 1 (Year 1&2) lesson plan that aligns perfectly with Emma Wallace's recent children's book 'This Girl Built That'. This collaborative effort aims to educate children and foster a love for construction from an early age, without gender barriers.

Emma's journey in creating 'This Girl Built That' was made possible with the NAWIC Bright Ideas Grant showcasing NAWIC's dedication to empowering individuals with Bright Ideas in construction. The grant allowed Emma to bring her ideas to life through words and illustrations resulting in a book that introduces kids to the construction world in an engaging and fun way. It also highlights a diverse range of women who are working in the industry, allowing young girls to be what they can see.

The lesson plan complements Emma's book by offering teachers a roadmap to integrate its themes into the school curriculum. It aims to foster an interest in construction and is designed to be interactive and fun, encouraging students to explore the industry. To ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the lesson plan, NAWIC is initiating a trial run involving 20 schools. The intention is to gather feedback from teachers to help NAWIC improve the lesson plan based on classroom experiences. Working together with schools reflects NAWIC's dedication to staying connected with the education community and customising resources to fit their needs.

As part of NAWIC's long term goals linked to the priority of 'Increasing the Pool of Women in Construction', the main aim is to provide 'This Girl Built That' and the lesson plan to every primary school in Australia over the next five years. By providing teachers with engaging materials NAWIC hopes to inspire builders, regardless of gender, and remove barriers that once hindered women's involvement in construction.

When used by teachers and students 'This Girl Built That' and the lesson plan serve as a tool for shaping perspectives, challenging stereotypes and establishing a basis for a construction industry that truly represents our society's diversity and talent.

*This Girl Built That was made with the goal of inspiring and exposing primary school aged children to the job opportunities available in construction; it features bright illustrations depicting diverse characters in a variety of job roles to empower the next generation of potential construction workers. This Girl Built That was very much a passion project, which I wrote and illustrated, and was supported by NAWIC through the funding from the 2022 Bright Ideas Grant.*

*With approximately 9000 primary schools across Australia, it has been my aspiration to get a copy of This Girl Built That into every school; broadening the exposure of the construction industry to children (and particularly girls) at a young age. I hope that children see construction jobs available as aspiring jobs for the future, and not just something they fall in to, or worse, not even consider.*

*I am thrilled to see This Girl Built That at school, and reflect on the messaging with teachers and students, but they will also reinforce and challenge their understanding by applying what they learn.*

*I look forward to challenging stereotypes. I look forward to seeing girls aspiring to be crane operators and project managers, and I am so excited to see that the simple saying "if you can see it, you can be it" will resonate and be reinforced across primary schools around Australia.*

NAWIC, along with Emma and teachers across the country is leading the charge towards a more equitable construction industry where women fully participate.

## Danielle's Bright Idea

The NAWIC Bright Ideas Grant is awarded to support a woman, group or partnership to launch a new business venture, program or idea related to the construction industry. In 2023 we awarded Danielle Lester, who's bright idea will see her creating female led productions, using factual and fictional storytelling to put women in STEM front and center on our screens.

*My application is to set up a female led and predominately STEM focused production company, HERstory Productions. Women's stories shared and produced by women have had a profound influence on me and I'm sure on others over the course of our lives. The Bright Ideas Grant has not only reignited my passion for storytelling and research, but also given me the confidence to move forward with an idea that has been simmering away for years now.*

You can follow Danielle's first production to come from HERStory, filming her tiny house build and highlighting the impact that the housing crisis is having on women @tinysolutiontoabigproblem.





# THE LEAKY PIPELINE PODCAST

## A PODCAST FOR THE CHANGEMAKERS



Join our host Lauren Fahey, NAWIC General Manager, as she discusses the challenges, opportunities and what it means to be a changemaker in the construction industry. With guests Rebecca Hanley, Jo Farrell, Dominique Gill, past NAWIC award winners and many more, we get to the bottom of the real issues within construction and share collective thoughts on how we can make it a more diverse and inclusive industry that attracts, retains and develops women, uses their transferable skills and supports them through parental leave, while providing equal opportunity. Let's continue to break down barriers, shifting the culture once and for all. #werisetgether

In our most recent episodes, we speak to:

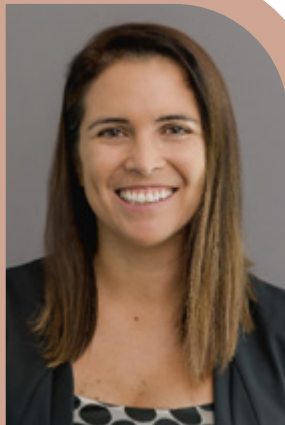
*Cassandra Kirby*

Cassandra is the recipient of the 2024 NAWIC AICD Scholarship Award. As a busy mum of three, and construction lawyer, she discusses the importance of flexibility in the workplace and highlights ADCO's innovative approach to supporting female employees.



*Cynthia Calderon*

Cynthia is a true pioneer in the construction industry. She opens up about her journey, navigating the challenge of earning respect amongst her male counterparts, and shares her experience. She highlights the shift happening within the industry right now, and why it's the perfect time for anyone to pursue a career in construction.



*Jessica MacDonald*

Jessica is the winner of the 2023 NAWIC SA Business Professional Award, 2023 NAWIC SA President's Choice Award and 2023 NAWIC National President's Choice Award. With a commitment to inclusivity, she's driving change by creating opportunities for women, and First Nations People in the industry.

You can find The Leaky Pipeline Podcast on your favourite streaming platforms.





# NAWIC COUCH

## A VIDEO SERIES BY THE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PORTFOLIO



From inception the NAWIC Diversity & Inclusion Portfolio set out to break down barriers, create opportunities and raise awareness for the least represented in our community - and for those who don't always feel part of the 'everybody'. As a part of platforming, listening to understand and advocating for these voices we committed to sharing the stories, achievements, challenges and insights of those who don't typically put themselves in the spotlight- and should!

With a passion, vision and encouragement from the D&I Portfolio - NAWIC Couch came to life! The headline is to tell diverse stories in diverse ways. After connecting with potential guests, episode planning and some nerves, I recorded the first episode with Lisa Erlandson. While I felt my own doubts and fears about releasing this concept, being the host, and if people would *want* to watch this, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive and a catalyst to continue this style of conversation.

Season One is made up of five instalments - Lisa Erlandson, Thanh Huynh, Luisa Panuccio, Vini & Princi Tandel and Chloe Hite. It is my goal with these webisodes to bring you into the room for gritty, relevant and real conversations, and I hope when you leave that reflection and action will follow. These stories might make you laugh, make you mad, make you cry but also fill you with hope leaving you empowered and inspired.



*Rachael Sharp*

Host of NAWIC Couch

Your ongoing support is needed to continue these conversations! You can subscribe at [Youtube.com/@NAWICAU](https://www.youtube.com/@NAWICAU).



# IWD SCHOLARSHIP

## CREATING EQUITABLE WORKPLACES IN CONSTRUCTION

Our International Women's Day Scholarship is awarded to a NAWIC member involved in the construction industry to cover a research topic or initiative that will benefit a woman in our industry in her career. In 2023 we awarded Dr. Aparna Samaraweera whose research proposal titled 'Lifting Barriers to Gender Equality in the Australian Construction Industry' is of immense value to a range of participants in the industry from small business all the way to tier 1 builders. We want to thank Dr Aparna for her research and dedication to the construction industry.

### Creating Equitable Workplaces in Construction

The construction industry is heavily dominated by traditionally held masculine ideologies making industry roles more challenging for females. Much of the current literature describes the difficulties experienced by women who work in this sector, including cultural and structural barriers, such as harassment and discrimination, limited networking opportunities and long and inflexible working hours, which often result in poor career prospects and elevated levels of stress. Research suggests that female construction workers experience higher stress than their male counterpart because of gender-related stressors including discrimination, skill underutilisation and career stagnation. The early enthusiasm from females about the construction industry, professions in construction and their own careers in construction decline when in the face of these harsh realities of a construction workplace. Thus, transforming the construction industry culture from toxic to inclusive is vital for attracting more females into the construction industry.

In view of the facts cited above, a research study was carried out with the aim of understanding the workplace cultural barriers preventing women from entering the construction industry to identify measures to remove those barriers and support female workers. This research was funded by the International Women's Dayscholarship 2023 of NAWIC. The aim was approached through a national survey with the participation of 441 females from the construction industry followed by 8 focus group discussions with 30 females. Six recommendations to improve gender equity at construction workplaces were derived out of the data collected, which are to be implemented at organisational level and industry level at large as described subsequently.

### Strategies to be Implemented at the Organisational Level

#### Recruitment

Most organisations in construction industry are pressurised to achieve gender equity and diversity targets, which has made them hire more females for different work roles purposely. These 'diversity hires' seem to have negatively backfired the female workers, who get bullied or belittled by fellow male workers assuming those females were hired just to fill numbers and not based on right qualifications or capabilities. Thus, it is essential to ensure organisations adopt unbiased recruitment processes, drafting more-inclusive job advertisements with more equitable terms such as flexible work arrangements, paid parental leave and safe work environments, emphasising transferable skills and applying consistent standards for assessing all applicants, regardless of gender. This could provide fair and equitable opportunities for everybody.

#### Policy

With the current drive to promote gender equity in Australia and worldwide, many large organisations have already developed and implemented gender equity policies for their organisations. This research provides evidence that, for many organisations, these policies have merely become promotional materials than a real embrace of the concept reflected in their day-to-day operations. Thus, female employees in such organisations still have concerns regarding gender equity. Lack of understanding of specific female needs, such as those pertaining to dress code, health concerns and parental leave, appear to be the major reasons construction work roles are less attractive to female workers. Therefore, it is recommended to co-design with workers when introducing or reviewing policies to make them more inclusive and equitable.

#### Monitoring & Reporting

A proper gender equity policy should include an effective reporting mechanism for the violation of the policy. This research found evidence on some organisations lacking proper internal reporting mechanisms for the cases of gender equity violations. Many female workers tend to endure such abuses, either due to fear of getting highlighted, which they believe could backfire them or due to lack of knowledge on a possible reporting mechanism or non-availability of a proper reporting mechanism. Therefore, it is recommended to introduce independent monitoring and reporting systems for compliance as this seems to be a major weakness in organisational gender equity policy management.

## Strategies to be Implemented at the Industry Level

### Industry Practice

To create an equitable workplace, the construction industry urgently needs to transform its practices to flexible working arrangements, reduced/reasonable working hours, supportive parental leave, enhanced childcare facilities and reasonable client expectations on project outcomes. To bring such a change in culture, there is a necessity for collaborative action among construction industry regulators representing the federal government, professional bodies and associations representing the industry, and major construction organisations acting as principal contractors. Moreover, it is essential to provide more support to small and medium sized organisations to create equitable workplaces as such organisations lack necessary resources to achieve equitable work environments. An industry-wide collaboration of major stakeholders is required to develop strategies to provide such support.

### Education

Legal literacy of female workers related to gender equity matters seems very low in the construction industry. Women lack awareness of protection available through legislations and, more importantly, external reporting mechanisms to seek help. Therefore, it is recommended to initiate educational and awareness programs at both the individual organisational and construction industry levels by professional bodies, associations and education institutes to improve legal literacy of construction workers, to empower them to stand for their own protection against gender inequity.

### Social Networks

Females in the construction industry require more networking among themselves to strengthen their standing and to attract more females to the sector. Apparently, there is a recent rise in social networks among female construction workers such as the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), Women Building Australia and Tradeswomen Australia, to name a few. Numerous initiatives are being carried out by those organisations to create collective strength for female construction workers, which is a positive sign towards creating an equitable workplace in a male-dominated industry. Government support and recognition for those organisations and related activities is essential to enhance their capacity and ensure continuity. Such recognition could encourage more individuals to join those associations and improve sponsorships, which

## for Construction Organisations

<p>Diversity hire could be considered but with caution—it could backfire</p> <p>Move beyond traditional job descriptions—consider transferable skills</p> <p><b>1</b> RECRUITMENT</p>	<p>Co-design with workers when introducing or reviewing policies</p> <p>Increase female representation in top managerial roles</p> <p>Offer avenues for upskilling</p> <p>Differentiate policies to suite type of work</p> <p><b>2</b> POLICY</p>	<p>Introduce independent monitoring and reporting system for compliance</p> <p><b>3</b> MONITORING &amp; REPORTING</p>
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## for the Construction Industry

<p>Introduce flexi work arrangements, increase parental leave and access to childcare</p> <p>Encourage clients to have reasonable expectations of project programs</p> <p>Provide more support to SMEs to create equitable workplaces</p> <p><b>4</b> INDUSTRY PRACTICE</p>	<p>Enhance female-targeted construction education</p> <p>Build awareness regarding benefits of a gender-diverse workforce, how to navigate them and the legal rights and protection</p> <p><b>5</b> EDUCATION</p>	<p>Empower social networks of female workers</p> <p>Provide mentoring</p> <p>Improve lobbying and advocacy on gender equity</p> <p><b>6</b> SOCIAL NETWORKS</p>
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may bring more power to advocate and lobby for gender equity matters in the construction sector.

The outcome of this research provides essential directions for numerous stakeholders of the construction industry to strengthen planning, implementation, monitoring and controlling of their policies related to gender equity at organisational and industry levels to create an equitable workplace for construction industry participants.

The Webuild & Clough International Women’s Day Scholarship 2024 was recently award to Siena Fielke who’s research aims to delve into the factors influencing women’s career choices by surveying educational institutions and exploring how co-educational vs single sex schools types, sizes, class options and values shape the aspirations of female students.

The findings will help guide change to promote inclusivity of women within the construction industry. We can’t wait to share the results and impacts this research will provide through the year!



# BUILDING A DIVERSE FUTURE

## INVESTIGATING STRATEGIES TO ATTRACT & RETAIN WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

A recent research study,<sup>1</sup> examines the factors that attract and retain women professionals in the construction industry. Offering valuable insights, the study explores how women perceive these factors across different age groups and roles within the industry. Despite its pivotal role in driving global economies and shaping urban landscapes, the construction industry has long grappled with gender imbalance and challenges in recruiting and retaining women. Currently women only represent 26% of the industry workforce, despite projections of significant growth in the sector. Data reveals a concerning trend: while female appointments increased from 16% in 2016 to 25% in 2023, resignations also surged from 18% to 26% during the same period.<sup>2</sup> These statistics cast a shadow over the industry's future growth prospects, particularly in light of increasing skill shortages and the anticipated surge in employment share.

Infrastructure Australia's Chief Executive, Adam Copp, emphasised the urgency of the situation, stating that "Construction activity and demand for skills and labour is at a historic high".<sup>3</sup> With government infrastructure investment expected to reach \$230 billion over five years and plans to build 1.2 million new homes, alongside major investments in the energy sector quadrupling over the same period, construction employment is projected to grow by 66.4% by November 2026.<sup>4</sup> Encouragingly, recruiting more women has been identified as a potential solution to address skill shortages in the industry.

The study's findings shed light on the pivotal role of 'career opportunities' as the primary motivator drawing women to pursue careers in construction. This echoes previous research, highlighting the enduring appeal of prospects for professional advancement. Interestingly, factors such as salary considerations, once perceived as paramount, now appear to wield diminished influence, singling a shift in priorities among aspiring female professionals. Moreover, perceptions surrounding the industry's image have undergone a transformation, possibly attributable to recent strides in fostering diversity and inclusivity, as well

as heightened governmental support initiatives. As a result, previous barriers to female participation in construction, such as negative stereotypes or cultural biases, appear to be loosening their hold on aspiring women professionals.

Delving deeper, the data reveals nuanced variations in preferences and challenges across different age cohorts. Younger women, for instance, exhibit a heightened preference for factors like career guidance and training opportunities, reflecting a desire for holistic career development support. In contrast, older women may grapple with age-related biases or concerns over job stability, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address their specific needs. Moreover, the study uncovers a myriad of barriers impeding women's retention in the industry.

From navigating a male-dominated culture to grappling with work-life balance issues, women face multifaceted challenges that underscore the complexity of retention efforts. Role specific barriers further complicate the landscape, with non-managers contending with physical demands while managers wrestle with the pressures of long working hours and demanding schedules. By leveraging these insights, construction organisations can refine their policies and programs to attract, retain and empower female talent effectively, driving positive change and ushering in a new era of diversity and inclusion in the construction industry.

The research team extends their gratitude to Emma Hassett from ACCIONA Australia, recipient of the NAWIC 2021 IWD Scholarship, for providing invaluable data collected during this scholarship research that contributed to this research publication.

For enquiries about this topic, please contact Dr Marzena Baker on [marzena.baker@acu.edu.au](mailto:marzena.baker@acu.edu.au)

*Dr. Marzena Baker*

*PhD., FHEA - Senior Lecturer, Peter Faber Business School, Australian Catholic University*

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**we** *advocate for change*



# WOMEN'S SAFETY

## ONSITE

As a Career Due Diligence Engineer, I was at a NSW mine for a consulting job and required gumboots before I could go underground. The smallest boots were way too large for my small foot size. Walking around the mine, a boot slipped off - with my concerned face, my male colleague reassured me "If anything happens and we need to exit quickly, don't worry, I'll pick you up under my arm and run with you!". Lucky I had a man for my rescue!

In 2011, I was National Deputy Chair of Women in Engineering with Engineers Australia, and as a group we decided to run a project on the lack of women's fit-for-purpose PPE. Research confirmed the only options available in Australia were downsized men's workwear or a unisex range. We decided to design a range that was fit-for-purpose and designed for women that would embrace all the different shapes and sizes we come in. After receiving great feedback at the 15th International Conference of Women Engineers and Scientists, we then ran a trial in partnership with John



Holland with more positive feedback. As a not-for-profit organisation, that was as far as we could push the idea of fit-for-purpose women's PPE.

Committed to changing the safety landscape for women, three of us started Apto PPE with the goal to design and manufacture proper fitting, female safety workwear that delivered ultimate comfort and, from my due diligence engineering perspective, ultimate safety. With no other products in the market at the time, we were confident we would make a huge impact for women working onsite around Australia. How wrong could we be?!

More than 12 years later, we have certainly increased awareness and discussions, and have seen other women's PPE products enter the market. Yet, we are staggered how many women in male dominated industries are unaware that fit-for-purpose women's workwear exists, especially maternity. Women wearing downsized men's hi-vis shirts and pants onsite is still the norm - How can this be the case?

From our experience, when we first meet an organisation we are contacted by an enthusiastic woman determined to solve the problem of ill-fitting PPE in their workplace. They touch and try on our range, loving the fit and quality, feeling comfortable and confident - then being told by higher positions who don't see the value in supplying the range, that there's not enough women to justify the spend. It is seen as transactional, with no ROI, that results in women giving up their fight.

We talk a lot about the need to increase female uptake in industries like construction and engineering, yet how are we being the example to young women that we care about retention if there's no access to fundamental rights like female toilets and women's safety gear? Ultimately, this is about safety and with WHS/OHS legislation and Criminal Manslaughter embedded into Australian Safety Legislation, we challenge industry leaders to ask themselves and their boards:

*Why wouldn't we have proper fitting, safe workwear for women onsite?*

Businesses and Organisations must ensure they have achieved the highest level of protection as is reasonable for their people onsite. This means treating your women equally to your men, and now with options available, there's no practicable excuses.

*Gaye Francis*

*Owner and Founder of Apto PPE Women's & Maternity Safety Workwear, co-director at R2A Due Diligence Engineers, keynote speaker and co-author of books on Criminal Manslaughter, Project Governance and Due Diligence Engineering. Head to [www.aptoppe.com.au](http://www.aptoppe.com.au).*



# BREAKING STEREOTYPES

## WOMEN IN THE TRADES

In the realm of the trades, stereotypes have long dictated what is deemed acceptable or expected based solely on gender. Yet as women continue to break down these barriers and redefine the norms, the irrelevance of these stereotypes becomes increasingly apparent. As the founder of Sparkychics, Bunbury's trusted local electrical services provider, I, Betty Foster, am passionate about highlighting the importance of authenticity and empowerment for women in the trades.

### Embracing Authenticity & Challenging Stereotypes

At the core of empowerment lies authenticity. For women in the trades, being true to oneself is not just an act of rebellion against societal expectations, but an affirmation of identity and value. Whether I wear a pink hard hat or steel-toed boots, my authenticity shines through my work ethic, resilience and unwavering determination. In a world that often seeks to confine women to narrow boxes labelled 'masculine' or 'feminine' embracing authenticity becomes a radical act of defiance. The belief that certain professions are inherently masculine or feminine undermines the capabilities of women in the trades, we know that gender has no bearing on skill or competence or what it means to be a tradesperson - it's time to shift the focus from outdated stereotypes to the qualities defining success in the trades such as; proficiency, innovation and commitment to excellence.

### Empowering the Next Generation & Supporting Each Other

As trailblazers in the trades, we must pave the way for the next generation of female professionals. By fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, we inspire young women to pursue their passions without fear of judgement or discrimination. Through mentorship programs and outreach initiatives, we empower young women to embrace their authenticity and recognise their potential to shape the future of the industry. It's crucial for women and men in the trades to support each other. The journey of a woman in a male-dominated field can be challenging, and having a supportive network can make all the difference. We need to prioritise creating a community where women can share their experiences, seek advice and lift each other up. Together we are stronger, and together we can overcome any obstacle.

### Overcoming Challenges & Celebrating Diversity & Inclusion

Despite the progress we've made, women in the trades still face numerous challenges. From discrimination and harassment to unequal opportunities and pay disparities, the road to gender equality and celebrating diversity and inclusion in the trades is fraught with obstacles. However, by continuing to speak out against injustice, advocating for equal treatment, and demanding accountability from employers and policymakers, we can create a more equitable and inclusive industry for future generations.

### Educating & Inspiring

Education and inspiration are powerful tools in the fight for gender equality in the trades. By sharing our stories, experiences and expertise, we can inspire more women to pursue careers in the trades and break down barriers that prevent them from entering the field. Providing resources, mentorship and support to aspiring female tradespeople, we can ensure they have the tools and confidence they need to succeed.

In a world where stereotypes still hold sway, women in the trades are rewriting the narrative. By embracing authenticity, challenging stereotypes, and prioritising skill over appearance, we pave the way for a more inclusive and diverse industry. Let us continue to champion our right to be authentically ourselves, because when women thrive, the entire industry thrives. Together, let us build a future where gender is no barrier to success, and where every woman has the opportunity to shine.

At Sparkychics, we are passionate about highlighting the importance of authenticity and empowerment, challenging stereotypes, celebrating unique talents, perspectives, and lived experiences of women in trades. We prioritise community and creating a safe environment to seek advice, and support women through mentorship and resources, ensuring that women have the tools and confidence they need to succeed.

*Betty Foster*

Manager - Sparkychics

# TRANSFORMING WORKPLACE CULTURE IN CONSTRUCTION

## A PATH TO GENDER EQUITY & INCLUSIVITY

The construction industry, a powerhouse of the Australian economy, is known for its remarkable projects that shape our skylines. Yet, within the towering structures and bustling sites, there's an issue that needs our immediate attention – workplace culture. In this article, we delve into the dynamics of workplace culture within the construction industry, with a specific focus on addressing gender bias and fostering inclusivity.

The construction sector has long been characterised by its male-dominated workforce, being known as 'A Man's World'. While it has made strides towards progress, gender bias continues to persist. This bias manifests itself in various ways, from unequal opportunities for women to a culture that often sidelines their contributions.

### Addressing Gender Bias

To create lasting change, we must first acknowledge the issue. In Australia, we've made significant strides in bringing attention to this pressing concern. Initiatives aimed at addressing gender bias, such as awareness programs, diversity training, and mentorship opportunities, are emerging. I take great pride in the work accomplished by Empowered Women in Trades in this space and am deeply honoured to contribute to the movement that is opening doors of opportunity for women in the trades. It's crucial to dismantle stereotypes and cultivate an environment where every worker, irrespective of gender, feels genuinely valued and respected.

### Promoting Inclusivity

Inclusivity goes beyond gender; it encompasses a broad spectrum of diversity. Embracing diversity leads to a richer tapestry of perspectives and experiences, which can ultimately drive innovation and productivity. Inclusivity initiatives need to focus on creating psychologically safe environments where every individual can thrive. It is essential we consider belonging theory and the concept of high-quality connections when designing inclusivity initiatives as they play a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity.

When individuals feel a sense of belonging and establish meaningful connections in the workplace, regardless of their background, they are more likely to contribute their best and fully engage in a collaborative and positive way on site. These

theories underline the importance of not only addressing gender bias but also creating a culture that values and respects every member, reinforcing the notion that inclusivity benefits all.

### The Role of Positive Psychology

Positive psychology offers valuable insights into transforming workplace culture. It serves as a key tool to shift toxic cultures prevalent in male-dominated industries like construction towards positive onsite cultures. This transformation isn't just about addressing gender bias; it's about creating environments where everyone, regardless of their gender, background, or role, can thrive.

The essence of the positive psychology work and research I have been doing lies in adopting a gratitude-centric approach. This approach actively promotes positive masculine norms, fostering cooperation, empathy, and respectful behaviour among workers. It elevates overall well-being, reduces stress, and creates a psychologically safe environment where employees feel valued and respected.

This shift in mindset and culture is vital for achieving lasting change. It paves the way for more inclusive, diverse, and harmonious workplaces. Positive psychology isn't just a theoretical concept; it's a practical tool that organizations can use to create environments where individuals are empowered to reach their full potential and contribute to the broader goal of achieving Empowered Women in Trades mission of seeing 30% female representation within skilled trades by 2030. It's about building a future where the construction industry thrives on positivity, collaboration, and a deep sense of belonging.

In conclusion, transforming workplace culture in the construction industry is not just a matter of ethics; it's a necessity for progress. By addressing gender bias and fostering inclusivity, we can harness the full potential of our workforce, drive innovation, and create a thriving industry that welcomes individuals from all backgrounds. The time to act is now, and together, we can build a brighter, more inclusive future for the construction sector.



CEO and Founder

Empowered Women in Trades [Hacia.atherton@ewitrades.com](mailto:Hacia.atherton@ewitrades.com)

# Global business, endless opportunities

As a global business, we offer our people unique opportunities to work across our global regions. We have successfully relocated a range of people in different roles and locations, to support their career and personal development, and share knowledge across our business.

Having undertaken an electrical apprenticeship, Mia Cooper started her career at Multiplex as a Receptionist in our Brisbane head office, seeing the role as a foot in the door of an industry she was interested in. When the time came for her to move back home to Perth, a relevant opportunity came up in WA allowing Mia to stay on in a project administration role before being promoted to a Site Administrator for the RAAF Base Curtin Redevelopment. Relocating with Multiplex removed the pressure of moving across the country and also set her on a new career path.

“Before I relocated from Brisbane to Perth, I wasn’t aware of the variety of roles available to me in construction. Moving into a project role, I get to work with all sorts of people. I now see so many possibilities for my future career at Multiplex.”

For BIM Coordinator Sophie Orr, a move from Multiplex’s Glasgow to Brisbane business enabled her to build her expertise in digital construction alongside a new lifestyle.

“When I spotted the role and expressed my interest, the team was 100% supportive. Within three months I found myself on the other side of the world, assigned to a major hospital project north of Brisbane, and enjoying a Queensland summer.

“In the UK digital construction is mandated on all projects. I’ve already learnt a lot from the team during the design phase of my project, and I’m looking forward to bringing my knowledge from the UK to the construction phase.”

Check out where a career at Multiplex could take you at [www.multiplex.global/au/careers](http://www.multiplex.global/au/careers)



Sophie Orr, BIM Coordinator



Mia Cooper, Site Administrator

# NORMALISING MENSTRUATION, MENOPAUSE, & REPRODUCTIVE WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

## DESTIGMATISING WOMEN'S HEALTH THROUGH MODERN POLICY

**P**ainful periods are not normal. Yet, our culture has normalised menstrual pain and taught young girls, women, and gender diverse people to associate their experiences with feelings of embarrassment, shame and awkwardness; establishing a resilient menstrual taboo within our society. The instilled discreteness of our menstrual experiences has encultured menstruators to mask and dismiss the debilitating pain commonly associated with menstruation and menopause.

The diversity of symptoms and severity of pain is further amplified for those with a diagnosis, or awaiting a diagnosis of Endometriosis, Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) or other chronic illnesses. Some women may suffer throughout the entirety of their life, experiencing health challenges during menstruation, pregnancy - and the complications that many encounter in conceiving, postpartum, perimenopause and menopause. Although, understanding the true complexity of women's health has not been prioritised in public health, and has therefore continued to undermine optimal health outcomes.

At a time when the Victorian Government is taking proactive steps to address perimenopause and menopause challenges, as well as announcing an Australian first inquiry into Women's Pain,

it is essential to heighten discussions around modernising leave entitlements in our workplaces. To introduce policies which give recognition to the unique and ever-changing health challenges faced by women and gender diverse people.

At the beginning of 2022, discussions surrounding **Newpol Construction's** capacity to introduce employee-centric policies that reinforce our commitment to enhancing the health and wellbeing of our team began. We did not rush this process, as it was imperative that these policies reflected the needs of our employees, and would support the promotion of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace culture.

Newpol was proud to rollout three new policies in the 23-24 financial year, these included Newpol's Parental Leave Policy, Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy, and Menstrual Health and Wellbeing Policy, which I will be focusing on in this piece.

Through this policy, we wanted to support employees in their ability to adequately self-care during menstruation or menopause and eliminate the need to deplete their paid sick leave entitlements, or take leave unpaid. Moreover, it was a tool to raise awareness, normalise conversations and remove stigma and or shame around the key reproductive health experiences and challenges faced by women and gender diverse people.





So, what does Newpol's policy entail?

### Menstrual & Menopause Leave

Female and gender diverse employees are eligible to five-paid leave days per calendar year, if they are unable to perform work duties because of menstruation or menopause, and the associated symptoms.

When relevant, this additional leave can be utilised by employees experiencing symptoms of pregnancy-related illness. As an alternative, if an employee would feel more comfortable to manage their symptoms at home, they may work from home.

An objective of this policy was to acknowledge and alleviate the impact of the varying health needs of female employees. Therefore, this policy did not feel complete without the recognition of one's sexual and reproductive wellbeing. As a result, the second component of our policy was formed.

### Sexual & Reproductive Health Leave

Female and gender diverse employees are eligible for five-paid leave days per calendar year, for matters related to their sexual and reproductive wellbeing. This additional leave may be used for Fertility Leave, Abortion Leave, and Grievance Leave.

Expanding this leave type to all employees, regardless of gender, was important, given its potential impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of both men and women. Further, we did not want anyone (employed at Newpol or not) to endure these experiences in isolation.

Therefore, all employees are eligible for two-paid carer leave days per calendar year, to support a partner or family member who is undergoing fertility treatment, terminating a pregnancy, and or has experienced a miscarriage.

Prior and since the implementation of our Menstrual Health and Wellbeing Policy, the commentary has been overwhelmingly positive, with the majority acknowledging how unique and progressive it is. These interactions have involved women across various roles and industries; Head of People & Culture at a Tier 1 Construction Company, Women's Health Specialists, HR Lawyers, DEI Strategy Specialists, and even representatives from UN Women AU.

It is evident that despite the (slow) emergence of public analyses surrounding the introduction of Menstrual Leave in Australian workplaces, it is far from common practice, even more so in the construction industry. This can explain the (minority of) traditionalist and narrow-minded attitudes which we also encountered.

*"But what if the men in your organisation do not support the policy?"*

Whilst we are extremely proud of this policy and its inclusion, its effectiveness was dependent on our workforce's support of its

implementation, to ensure eligible employees felt empowered to utilise it.

It is essential to recognise how the attitudes and values of leadership will trickle through an organisation. From the rollout, and the years prior, our team saw our two (male) directors voicing their genuine care, support, and endorsement of this policy. If your organisation, and its leaders, prioritise a respectful and empathetic culture, such policies will be successful.

I have since increasingly witnessed open, curious, and shame-free conversations surrounding menstruation, and women's health more broadly. Discussions that might have previously taken place amongst female colleagues in discrete and private settings, are now being had in communal spaces. Years of conditioning, and instincts of shame and embarrassment are being challenged.

We need to encourage women and girls to listen, trust and respect what their bodies are telling them. In order to do so, the status quo needs to be disrupted.

I wish to conclude this piece with a personal reflection on how this policy has empowered me to prioritise my own wellbeing. Initially, my recommendations for this policy were through an empathic lens, and as a strategic tool to support Newpol's goal of enhancing gender equity. However, as the formation of this policy evolved, so did my resonance of the unique and complex pain women commonly experience.

I cannot understate how this policy, and its presence within our organisation, has assisted me whilst I continue to navigate the management and improvement of my sometimes excruciating symptoms. I have received genuine support and encouragement from our team, whether that is through increased flexibility to accommodate appointments, accessing the leave entitlements, or always checking in to see how everything is progressing.

I hope this piece amplifies the importance of raising awareness and normalising conversations surrounding menstrual health in our workplaces, amongst loved ones, and society more broadly. Irrespective of your position in your organisation, I encourage you to start the conversation on what steps can be taken to support menstruating and menopausal individuals in your workplace.

**Let us escalate this discourse**, as we cannot let another generation of girls begin menstruation with the perception that painful periods are normal, and that their reproductive wellbeing is not a health priority.

*Brand, Marketing, People & Culture at Newpol Construction*

# MOTHERHOOD & CONSTRUCTION

Living in a world that is safe, fair and equitable for women and girls to be who they want to be, has been something I've thought about for as long as I can remember. Growing up in a country town, raised by a mother who was a lawyer, taught me that having a voice and finding the courage to use it could be tough and tiring, but I had to learn early. I discovered pretty young that women aren't offered the privilege of ambiguity. We need to know who we are, what we want, how to juggle it and be grateful for it if we get it.

However, all of this became so much more real after my son was born in late January 2021. If you talk to mums who were pregnant during the pandemic, their stories are layered with a kind of complexity and isolation you might not expect from a pre-covid pregnancy. For some mothers, whose partners were asked to stay outside the appointment rooms, even when hearing their baby's heartbeat for the first time. For some, who rather than building community over coffee in cafés with other expecting parents along the way, have zoomed in for video meetings. For some who have even experienced labour alone, with lingering trauma and baby blues turning into Postnatal Anxiety and/or Depression - which happened to me.

I've been told I'm a 'textbook' case of Postnatal Anxiety and Depression. I gave birth in a small rural town hospital that wasn't equipped to care for interventions, and after being two weeks over due date, an induction not progressing and a 55 hour labour - I had an emergency caesarean section and my baby Shep was born. Three weeks later after a home visit by our community midwife, I found myself in a Mother and Baby Unit for women experiencing Postpartum PTSD. Depression and Anxiety - it changed and saved my life.

Women learn early that we need to know what we want, but what happens if we don't know because we've never done it before?

This is a lesson I will take with me forever and use it to drive my work in construction. As a single mother working in the industry, I know what I want - flexible working, access to childcare, leadership who understand and maybe a magic wand to take away the 'mum guilt' - the pain you feel leaving your crying child in the arms of educators as you rush to your morning meeting.

But as I discovered, there is another layer of guilt; employee guilt, which I hadn't realised existed until I became a mother. The guilt you feel asking to leave early to make pick up on time, the guilt you feel saying you won't be able to make a work event because you can't get care, the guilt you feel dialling into a meeting with a toddler who is wearing a shark head sitting on your lap. This is where employers come in. There is a lot that employers can do to create and support a culture, structures and policies that make it okay for parents and caregivers to be loud about their caring responsibilities. We should be celebrating mums, dads and all caregivers to cheer on their children at swimming carnivals, and for all the small things that are actually very big in their children's lives. Well rounded humans are happy humans, and happy humans are productive and collaborative employees.



In my role as Women in Construction Lead at ACCIONA Western Harbour Tunnel Project, playing a part in creating this culture and programs which support this is such a privilege. I benefit from this supportive environment personally; being able to work from home two days a week, having a leader who genuinely believes in the advancement of women and other diverse groups, and efforts to deconstruct the things that have always made it hard to retain great women in this industry.

That's my goal for this project. I hope by the time the Western Harbour Tunnel is completed, attitudes around starting and finishing times will be more open minded, that sites are excited to embrace flexibility and are advocates of offering hours that make this industry an option for women and men who have caregiver roles and responsibilities.

Times have changed, women still need to know what we want, but I think it's okay to talk about the struggle of the juggling. We can ask for more if we want to - and there's every chance if you're part of an organisation who believes in equity, that you might just get it.

*Samantha Grant*

Women in Construction Lead  
- ACCIONA Western Harbour Tunnel Project

*we educate & empower*



# EMBRACING MY NATURAL AFRO HAIR

Some people dread going to the dentist, but for me I had a fear of going to the hairdresser. My afro hair had always felt like an inconvenience, something that needed to be slicked back to make me look presentable in public. This led to me always just attempting to pull my hair into a ponytail, silently hoping my hair wouldn't make me stand out. I know that for many black women deciding to showcase their natural afro hair, takes courage as it has been a taboo subject for too many years.

Hair discrimination exists and black women have felt the effects of this throughout our everyday lives. The CROWN 2023 workplace research study (commissioned by Dove and LinkedIn) found:

- A black woman's hair is 2.5 times more likely to be perceived as unprofessional,
- Two thirds of black women change their hair for a job interview,
- 44% of black women felt pressured to have a headshot with straight hair.

These statistics are all things that I can relate to, and have contributed to how I have felt at times. The afro hair movement over the past 10 years has had great momentum, with the aim of getting black women to embrace their natural hair. You are now more likely to see a black woman with natural hair on TV, than you were to 20 years ago. However, black women tend to receive unnecessary attention regarding their hair. For instance, Serena and Venus Williams often have to contend with media focusing more on their hairstyles than their tennis skills.



Growing up, Saturday's were spent at my grandparents house with my sisters and cousins waiting in line to get our hair put in cornrows (canerows) by our mothers and aunties. We had no choice but to endure what I found to be an uncomfortable, long and often painful process. Our family would come up with intricate cornrow hairstyles, which looking back were incredible, but at the time painful - I always dreamt about having wash and go hair that would just fall perfectly into place.

As a teenager, I started relaxing my hair - which is the process of using chemicals to permanently straighten hair. I have memories of the tingling sensation on my scalp from the potency of the chemicals. My sister once received a relaxer from a hairdresser who failed to apply it correctly which caused major burns to her neck. When I started working I kept my hair straight as I had preconceived ideas about what people might think about my hair at work - never once did it occur to me to wear my hair natural.

When I moved to Australia a major concern for me was 'who would do my hair?' As a black woman with afro hair, the majority of hairdressers here didn't know how to work with my hair, nor have relevant training or experience! I relied on black women passing me by on the street to ask for recommendations - crazy!

Due to COVID and pregnancy, I decided to start the process of embracing my natural hair in 2020 - what a revelation this has been! I am now trying out different styles and experimenting with colours, changing my looks on a regular basis - although it can take a significant amount of time, and money.

Working within the construction industry means I need to wear PPE for site visits - therefore I need to be careful with the hairstyles I choose ensuring it fits under a hard hat! I want future generations to not feel the need to hide behind hairstyles because of what they believe society wants. I also want my daughter to have a better relationship with her hair and the hairdresser than I did. We go to the hairdresser together on a regular basis and she loves it!

However, I do acknowledge that for many black people wearing a weave, wig or relaxing their hair is what works best for them - it is important that each woman has a choice to do what works for them.

*Vanessa Hetherington*

NAWIC Diversity & Inclusion Portfolio

# WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN EXPECTING

## WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES OF PREGNANCY AT WORK

I have always respected and admired women - our resilience, determination, courage. But falling pregnant gave me a deeper and more profound respect and understanding for the resilience and bravery of women - our physical and mental fortitude, our productivity and power, and our tenacity to add value and succeed even when your body has other ideas.

And so, I wanted to collect some short stories, from pregnant women and their partners about their experiences. I wanted to shine a light on the less magical, less talked about aspects of pregnancy to give employers and managers an idea of what to expect when we're expecting. For me personally, when I began writing this story I was pregnant, and by the time I finished, I had tragically lost my baby. It is devastating, but it is sadly common and just shows me even more how important it is to tell these stories. To protect myself, and to protect the women who have shared their journey, we have kept it anonymous.

I share this information with trepidation, with trust and with hope. Trepidation that it will be used against us, to write us off or hold us back. Trust that you won't let that happen, that you will have our backs as we carry the load (literally). And hope, that this information will be educational, eye opening, validating and catalysing. That you will use it to ask questions, make meaningful adjustments, and show empathy and support. So read on, where what we want you to know:

Workplaces are severely unaware of how much life SUCKS when you are pregnant. I have hyperemesis gravidarum (HG) - an incredibly severe form of 'morning' sickness that causes severe nausea and vomiting during pregnancy, and well beyond the first three months.

In my first trimester I was vomiting 6-8 times a day, and had to take five weeks off sick. All I could do was lay in bed, most food sets me off and I am anaemic from all the sickness. I hoped, like many, my sickness would dissipate after the first trimester, but here I am at eight months pregnant still vomiting three times a day. My employer has been amazing in many ways, and I am really grateful for that. I got promoted even though they knew I was pregnancy, and I am getting paid parental leave, even though I haven't passed my probation yet - but the project leads are relentless. They pressure me to accept weekend paid overtime, and their expectations of hours and productivity has not changed at all.

Also, no one gives me a seat on the tram either - I go in late on purpose just to guarantee myself a seat.

*Civil Engineer, Victoria*

In all my pregnancies, I have been the person who needs to tell their employer they are pregnant the same time they find out - I struggle with intense nausea, inability to stand due to intense low blood pressure, being sick many times a day, the inability to speak because of my gag reflex, weight loss and pelvic floor issues - requiring needing to sit for work.

I was pregnant for the second time during the initial waves of COVID, back when employers were scared of everyone contracting it - I was asked to do nasal swabs everyday to show my symptoms weren't COVID - this resulted in me feeling worse, and most of all it was incredibly invasive. My boss (the business owner) I worked for said, and I quote "You can't be this ill everyday, or this won't work out." - as if I could just magic it all away. On a separate occasion she told me "I had a caesarean and I returned to work three days later, there's no excuse" as if it was a badge of honour, where in reality it was a huge risk to her health. She also talked about having morning sickness, being sick in a bag behind her desk and 'getting on with it'.

I will never forget how belittled and burdensome I felt - I was made to feel like I was letting the team down and while I knew this was a toxic environment, I couldn't leave - who would hire a pregnant woman? When I was 34 weeks, I starting have premature contractions, the real deal and when I asked to reduce my hours, I was told no. I ended up leaving anyway, and keeping my little baby inside until 40+6.

To this day I am so afraid of being pregnant again in case I am met with the same response at work. I actively advocate and speak up for women in my community when it comes to postpartum, pregnancy, birthing rights and boundaries in the hope that no woman ever feels mistreated while the are growing the miracle of life in their wombs.

*Communications, New South Wales*



My alarm goes off, I post my social media content, pee, take a shower, vomit twice, brush my teeth and leave for work.

On the tram journey on the way in, no one offers me a seat, because I guess I don't look *that* pregnant. I don't want to cause a fuss, so I don't ask for one. Instead, I stand all the way, holding onto the pole for dear life, feeling an 8 out of 10 level of queasy and hoping that the jerky motion, or the smell of that man's jacket doesn't lead to vomit number three.

I get to work, and my colleague has a bagel. I want a bagel, no wait, is that smoked salmon? Cue vomit number four. I used to like salmon, but now the mere thought of it makes me turn green. I brush my teeth again and go on a quest for a bagel of my own, and orange juice- I need orange juice. I snack constantly throughout the day in an attempt to feel vaguely functional and I pray that everyday won't be like this.

By 3pm I'm flagging, I feel a tiredness that I have never experienced before - like jet lag x10. My eyes are heavy, brain foggy, my arms and legs feel like they've been drained of all energy - I have to go home. Usually, I would walk to and from work, but I am barely making one leg of that journey these days. Just those 40 minutes of walking make me feel like I've

run a marathon. I used to be semi-nocturnal, coming into my zone at night, working on my side projects or day job overflow until 11pm some days. Well those days are well and truly over. I can no longer achieve much of anything after 4pm, I'm too tired to even read a book, I just nap, rest and pee.

My husband is suffering too. Watching me go through this is harrowing for him - I'm rarely ever ill. He rubs my back, and holds my hair back every morning and night as my whole body convulses with cramps, my eyes water and my throat inflames, and everything I ate that day comes back up. He goes to the supermarket daily trying to cater to my ever-changing cravings and aversions, and he worries about me.

At 12 weeks, just at the point I should be able to 'relax', our tests show devastating news about our baby - chromosomal abnormalities, and a little heart defect means our pregnancy is no longer viable. It's hurts so much because you can clearly see I'm pregnant now, and because I have suffered so much over the past three months growing this little human. We make the harrowing decision to end the pregnancy and say goodbye to the happy ending we hoped we would get.

*Director, Victoria*

I have to admit to having not wanted much support from others at work when I've been pregnant. My strategy is to tell as few people as possible at work to try to make sure no one tries to assume I couldn't do my job/travel/all of it because of carrying a tiny human around.

I got the kid glove treatment from my last employer, particularly after a pregnancy loss, and it drove me a bit potty, I also find that in an environment where the client is a white male of a certain age it's hard enough to convince them I know what I'm talking about without distracting them with the idea that I'm pregnant. I've realised people are super unobservant and with my recent pregnancy, I got away with not telling my team until I was 21 weeks pregnant, and still wasn't necessarily mentioning it to client until about 35 weeks. I also puked pretty regularly throughout the whole pregnancy but I'm not sure I would have wanted my employer or my line manager to do anything to support me. I would have liked to ask the person sitting next to me to not eat their lunch at their desk, but could never find a nice way to ask.

*Partner, Victoria*

Perhaps it's because I work in an all-female team, but I feel that I have been able to share the ups and downs of my pregnancy journey as much or as little as I chose, so overall I have had a very positive experience! But I totally get how hard it would be having to work with a manager who you maybe aren't comfortable with sharing the worst bits of pregnancy!

*Administrator, New South Wales*

The collection of stories shared shows how unique each pregnancy journey is for women, and whether it's sickness, associated health issues, appointments, or pregnancy loss - each journey comes with its unique challenges and requires unique support that goes well beyond a corporate parental leave policy.

I would like to see a world where women don't feel that we will be (further) discriminated against because of pregnancy (or children at home). Where line managers are one of the first few people we tell. We do so because they are a safe space for us, and we know they will help not hinder.

Imagine that.

# PUBLISHING EMPLOYER GENDER PAY GAPS

## A POWERFUL WAY TO TRACK PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY

Employer gender pay gap results, published for the first time in Australian history this year by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), highlight why industry-wide efforts to close the gap can fundamentally change the workplace experience for women and men in construction.

WGEA's results showed half of 228 construction industry employers that reported to us in 2023 have a gender pay gap above 25.8%.

Just 15 employers (7%) have a pay gap within the 'optimal' range of +/-5%. This compares to 30% of all employers (nearly 5,000 in total).

The data showed the industry had a long way to go to achieve gender equality.

Encouragingly, rather than burying heads in the sand or wheeling out vague excuses, employers and industry leaders in construction saw WGEA's publication as a chance to openly discuss the challenges.

The [National Association of Women in Construction Australia](#) reflected the results were *"disappointing, but [not] a huge surprise"* while the [Australian Constructors Association \(ACA\)](#) labelled it a [signal](#) of the industry's *"urgent need to change"*.

Both cited the publication as motivation to redouble efforts towards the ambitious, industry-wide goal to address recruitment and retention of women in the workforce – often referred to as the 'leaky pipeline' – in the next five years through the ACA's culture pledge. This includes further embracing flexible work, helping 75% of ACA members achieve the WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation and working to attract a new wave of talent to sustain the industry.

The challenge now is for the industry to identify and address both industry-wide challenges and employer specific blockages to improving gender equality.

One of the benefits of publishing employer gender pay gaps is that it identifies who in the industry is performing well. Industry groups can learn from these employers and offer ideas for other companies to integrate into their own approaches to gender equality.

Developing a plan and tracking progress against measures that are realistic for your organisation is key.

For example, Laing O'Rourke – which employs 2,700 people in Australia, 31% of them women – is implementing actions that work towards the company's global target of a 50:50 split of men and women by 2033.

Meanwhile, another construction company has identified initiatives that effect cultural change as its next step to address gender inequality. This includes providing training programs that address gender biases, sexual harassment and bullying, and which promote inclusive leadership.

We know that to tackle factors that drive gender inequality in the workplace – like workforce gender segregation and unequal caring responsibilities – employers cannot continue with business as usual.

Solving these challenges requires inspired leadership, new thinking and working collaboratively on broader industry wide challenges.

Industry groups, like NAWIC, have an important role to play in helping employers to prepare and to better understand how their organisation's action to address gender inequality can contribute to and benefit the entire industry.



The first publication of employer gender pay gaps is an important point for employers and industry groups to track progress. It's the starting point that existing or prospective employees, the media, investors, and consumers will look to for an indication of that company's commitment to gender equality.

To continue the momentum, gender pay gap reporting will be expanded in the next round of publication.

With CEO salaries included for the first time, WGEA will publish employer's average and median gender pay gaps for base salary and total remuneration. We will also publish results for gender composition and average remuneration per pay quartile. Employer gender pay gaps will be published individually for all

relevant employers, this includes those who submit their data as a part of a submission group. We expect this will mean results for over 8,000 employers will be published.

Both of these extensions to publishing will further increase transparency and be an ongoing catalyst for action that reduces the gender pay gap.

Every action employers take that contributes to closing their gender pay gap is a step towards the goal of ensuring all people are fairly represented, equally valued and rewarded in the workplace.

*Mary Wooldridge*

# BUILDING A WOMEN'S NETWORK

## IN MULTIPLEX VICTORIA



Michaela and I are fortunate to have each other's back. We have spent years at Multiplex, from the graduate program all the way to our current positions. Positions that now afford us more insight into the strategic part of the business and along with that, vision of the issues that the company is uncovering and attempting to tackle with respect to women's participation. Data on women's experience in the business has come with shock to many of our male colleagues. For us, the data is sometimes a reflection of our own experiences through our careers. It comes with obvious frustration that some challenges are still being faced by those following in our footsteps.

With insight comes a feeling of greater responsibility to make a difference, but also a feeling that we *can* make a difference.

The stories we share between women are so critical to understanding our experience and acknowledging the differences in our experience when compared to men. Gossip gets a bad rap. Visions of women sitting around, cackling over a cup of tea. But gossip has long been the way women are able to transmit critical information and the stories of our collective experience. We use stories to learn from one another, to explore the possibilities of the world around us; giving us new perspectives and ways to assess our own feelings and motivations. Stories can turn us to the hypothetical – a place where we can imagine all our possible futures and unconsciously help ourselves to select the best one for our future selves.

Creating a women's network at Multiplex has been a long-term passion project. In times past, when we were younger, the women of our grad program essentially 'found' each other and formed our own little safe circle. Allowing us to bounce off each other. Experiences shared; grievances aired. Support found through our stories and the knowledge we were able to share.

Eventually we were able to convince enough people that some after work networking for women was a good thing, across the board. Some 'Women and Wine' nights were held – to roaring success from the women's perspective, but with some remarks on why there needed to be 'exclusive' women's events. Then Covid happened. Organising anything with a group of people fell away. Our networks fell apart – formal or informal. The industry contracted. People left.

Now, the business sees Women's Networks as necessary. That employee networks, in general, are good for business. Someone looking through the window from the outside may see this as 'why did it take so long'. To be honest, we see it as the opposite. A bravery. It takes courage for a corporate to say that what they are doing isn't always working. Stepping up to the plate and acknowledging there has got to be another way forward.

Retention, retention, retention. Why is this so hard in Construction? What makes women leave? Why does a career on the builder's side of the fence feel at times unattractive – even with parental leave schemes, flexibility programs and attractive pay? Do we not blow our own trumpet enough? Are we not showing how the rewards of the industry – financial security, career growth, and scope to sidestep into different pathways, are actually great for women. Clearly the trade off to family and quality of life is perceived as 'not worth it', or more likely – there is too little examples of success. 'If you can't see it – you can't be it', is an adage for a reason. While the number of women entering the construction industry is higher than ever before, women remain a minority. This imbalance becomes more pronounced throughout the industry's upper echelons and for many

young women entering the sector, it's easy to feel lost without prominent examples of success to draw inspiration from.

Our network's core vision is for 'connection'. Getting to know the women across the business allows women to find peer support. Informal mentors. It's easier to 'cold call' someone you've met in conversation. Our hope is that women will reach out to their mentors, colleagues and senior leaders prior to making the choice to jump ship, if they have better relationships in place. Will women find a friendship circle of women across different projects to share the experiences and stories they have, as we did? Will those networks therefore support them through challenging times?

Discussing and telling stories about our experience is critical. But it's with our male colleagues that we also need to be sharing those stories. Fundamentally men cannot understand the women's experience without listening and educating themselves. The uptake on this varies greatly...and whilst it isn't women's jobs to educate men, it is our job to invite men who do want to understand, to come on the journey. Our network will hold events for women only – safe spaces for women. And it will run events where women are invited to bring a male colleague – someone they find is a supporter, someone they think may want to hear more, someone they think needs to listen. Allyship will be an experiment in seeing if we can extend women's experience to the wider business and change the perception that unconscious

bias isn't happening. Or that women can be treated different purely because of the system we are operating in.

When women have a strong voice, and when women see female leaders, they are themselves empowered to have a voice and have role models to follow to become successful leaders. Men also benefit from seeing the contributions made to the industry by women, gaining new perspectives and ideas and becoming more likely to incorporate women in prominent roles within project teams in the future.

Our hope is that we can finally shift the dial on retention. That women making it to leadership isn't a loss for others, but a gain for everyone. That you can feel supported and valued in your career and there is a pathway to the top, regardless of your gender. The measures for whether we are successful or not, are already in place. As more women rise in the company, hopefully we finally see that Gender Pay Gap shift. But it is an effort that cannot be made by women alone.

Hopefully the next time we sit down and write our thoughts, it is of the success of the network. A success measured with more connected and supported women in all levels of Multiplex.

*Danielle Savio  
& Michaela Jones*



# CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY

## WOMEN IN TRADES MENTORING PROGRAM

Running a program that recognises, celebrates and supports a group of young women, who prefer not to stand out from the crowd requires a touch of madness, a heap of persistence and a strong belief that every woman's story is worth being shared.

Charles Darwin University (CDU) launched the Women in Trades Mentoring Program in February 2023 to champion the growing gender diversity in male-dominated trades and provide female CDU apprentices with access to services, support and advice to help them achieve their goals and thrive in their chosen trade.

At CDU, trades such as Carpentry, Plumbing, Electrotechnology, Engineering (Mechanical and Fabrication), and Automotive have a female student cohort of only 10%. The Women in Trades Mentoring Program brings these female apprentices and VET in Schools students together, offering them a chance to connect with each other, grow their networks, share stories and seek advice from experienced tradeswomen- all over a free lunch. It is also a chance to share information about the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network and NAWIC with the students as well as all of the support services available to the apprentices through CDU, such as counselling, access and inclusion and First Nations student support etc.

At the end of the first year of the Women in Trades Mentoring Program, over 50% of the female apprentices had attended at least one mentoring

lunch, with many attending multiple times. Great conversations flowed over lunch, sometimes about how much they are loving their trade, and sometimes about the challenges they were facing. It is clear that many female apprentices don't want any kind of 'special treatment' - they just want to fit in with the rest of the team and to be judged on their merits.

Unfortunately for many, the construction industry hasn't yet reached that level of equitable treatment. Some female apprentices still have to put up with degrading 'locker room' banter about women and deal with bosses and colleagues who think it's funny to point out differences in physical strength. Many female apprentices have experienced colleagues, clients or the general public questioning their capabilities or their rightful place on the worksite or simply expecting them to fail. It is in these instances where the Women in Trades Mentors can offer advice, share stories and help to build the resilience and confidence of our students.

Encouraged by student and Mentor feedback at the end of 2023, the Women in Trades Mentoring Program has continued into 2024, bringing female apprentices together and providing a space to meet likeminded women to talk through challenges and achievements. CDU is committed to seeing our female apprentices in trades succeed in their chosen profession, bring greater diversity to their industry and maybe be the role models that they didn't have coming into their trade. Ultimately, we hope this program will help to dispel the old stereotypes and encourage young girls (and their parents) to consider trades as viable career options, as these industries move toward greater gender diversity and a culture of inclusivity and respect for all.

*Caroline Thompson*

Employability Programs Officer,  
Charles Darwin University





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# NAWIC National Awards for *Excellence*

**O**n May 3rd, we hosted our annual NAWIC National Awards for Excellence, this year celebrating at Sanctuary, nestled within Adelaide Zoo in South Australia and hosted by the incredible Myf Warhurst, Author, TV Personality and Podcast host, we recognised the most outstanding nominees across our chapters, announcing our 2023 National Winners.

The Awards were a huge success, and we want to thank the National staff for their combined efforts, and our guests and finalists for the impactful work they do every day in the construction industry, breaking down barriers and bias, their mentorship and empowerment for the women around them and their fearless pursuit in advocating for women in the male dominated fields they work within.

The NAWIC National Awards for Excellence bring together men and women, Australia wide to celebrate, champion and empower the businesses and women who are leading loudly, taking charge and actively creating change.





**NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S CHOICE AWARD  
SPONSORED BY ACCIONA**

*Winner: Jessica MacDonald*

Jessica is Executive Director and co-founder of for purpose business Yanun Project Services which was established to provide industry-leading project management and create tangible outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Jessica was the winner of the Business Professional Award in South Australia Awards for Excellence in 2023.



**NATIONAL CRYSTAL VISION AWARD  
SPONSORED BY URBAN CORE**

*Winner: Catherine Lopy*

Catherine is a Project Manager with TasWater in the Project Delivery Group. She is also a social entrepreneur, change advocate, award-winning author, speaker and serves in community leadership and executive board roles mentoring women and young people and contributing to community strategic plans and policies. Catherine was co-recipient of the Crystal Vision Award in the Tasmania Awards For Excellence in 2023.





### NATIONAL BUSINESS AWARD

*Winner: John Holland*

Beginning more than 70 years ago, John Holland is proudly one of Australia's leading building, infrastructure, and end-to-end rail and transport companies. Thanks to diverse experience and expertise across Australia and New Zealand, John Holland creates innovative and enduring solutions for its customers. John Holland is a WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality.



# 2023 NAWIC QLD

*awards for excellence*

RICC, BRISBANE QLD  
20TH OCTOBER 2023



## JOHN HOLLAND CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

*Winner: Rachael Turner, Front Porch Properties*

Rachael is the Owner and Director of Brisbane's multi-award winning, boutique residential design and construction company. As a licensed builder, she brings together her design and building knowledge to translate a clients vision into their dream home through an end- to-end building service. Rachael's success in the industry and her innovative approach have been an inspiration to those around her. Her leadership, business sense and design and construction talents underpin the success of her business and have cemented Front Porch Properties as a powerhouse boutique residential construction company in Brisbane.



## QLD GOVERNMENT AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

*Winner: Luciana Navarrete, GHD*

Luciana has over 10 years experience as an Environmental Scientist on large-scale Civil Infrastructure and Construction projects, Land Developments and Contaminated Land Assessments and Remediation works in Australia. She has extensive onsite experience verifying Principal Contractors compliance and implementation against environmental, erosion and sediment control, landscaping and sustainability aspects of a project against Project Technical Specifications.

## TAFE QLD STUDENT, TRAINEE OR APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR AWARD

*Winner: Large Enterprise - Georgia Andersen, Tomkins Commercial*

Georgia is a cadet at Tomkins Commercial, she is currently studying a Bachelor of Urban Development majoring in Construction Management. Georgia has achieved many professional milestones in her time at Tomkins including; overseeing the successful completion of a large-scale high rise residential project within a tight timeframe and working on one of Brisbane's most iconic residential projects. Georgia is an exceptional role model for other women in the construction industry and leads others by example, advocating for diversity and inclusion by challenging stereotypes and providing a supportive environment to other women in the construction industry.





**Winner: Small and Medium Enterprise - Bernadette McGovern, Women in the Built Environment**

Bernadette is an outstanding student of the E-Institute, successfully completing three nationally recognised qualifications. Her deep rooted passion for the construction industry stems from her upbringing in her parents conservation/ construction business, witnessing the profound impact of the built environment and her parents unwavering belief in women's capabilities. With a commitment to fostering gender diversity in the construction industry, Bernadette founded the impactful networking group 'Women in the Built Environment' (WITBE). Collaborating extensively with educational institutions and industry professionals, she passionately guides and inspires the upcoming generation of women entering the construction industry.

### CONSTRUCTION SKILLS QLD AWARD FOR TRADIE OF THE YEAR

**Winner: Large Enterprise - Hayley Buckle, Superior Walls & Ceilings**



Hayley is a qualified Carpenter with over 25 years experience in the construction industry. Hayley's journey started in 1998 when she started as a first year Carpenter and has been a pioneer in the industry ever since. Hayley's career has seen her work on iconic Brisbane buildings such as; City Hall, Parliament House, Brekky Creek Hotel, Boggo Road Jail, Morningside State School heritage listed classrooms and today, working on the multi- billion dollar Queens Wharf Projects where she is leading the way for the next generation of female tradies.

**Winner: Small Enterprise - Rachael Price, Rachael's Carpentry Services**



Rachael is a determined and passionate site supervisor. She is devoted to sharing her time on the NAWIC Women on Tools Committee, and to help drive the Construction Skills Queensland initiative to see 11% of blue collar front line roles filled by females. Rachael is enthusiastic about being a role model, and as a person with a mental health condition, demonstrates that she will not allow anything to stop her from reaching her dreams. She uses her service dog to start conversations around mental health in the workplace, and takes the time to check in on tradies who are struggling. She would love to contribute to educating schools that a career in blue collar industries are not a lesser career path, and to help young people make better, informed decisions in their careers.

### MULTIPLEX AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN CONSTRUCTION (GENERAL BUILDING)

**Winner: Large Project - Tanya Hansen, Mater**



Tanya is a high-performing and strategic thinker with an impressive career spanning nearly 20 years in the not-for-profit health services sector. As a skilled relationship builder, Tanya has proven her ability to forge strong connections with internal and external stakeholders across multiple organisations and teams. Her natural ability to collaborate and foster productive partnerships has been instrumental in driving the success of countless initiatives and projects. Tanya is known for her dedication to giving back to the community, her unwavering commitment to make a difference in people's lives extends beyond the workplace, making her a true inspiration to those who have had the pleasure of working alongside her.

**Winner: Small and Medium Project - Lauren Diduszko, Baseline**

Lauren is a Site Manager with more than 15 years experience in the Construction Industry, prior to this she developed from her role as Residential Carpenter. She was the Site Manager for the recent refurbishment of the Gallipoli Barracks for the Department of Defence. Working on Defence projects always ensures an extra layer of complexity due to the required safety and security protocols, and required management of live environments to maintain functionality for Defence Personnel. Working as Baseline Queensland's only female site team

member, Lauren has unconsciously worked towards breaking stereotypes of what women can achieve in the industry. She leads her project teams with integrity and honesty, truly believing that the team is greater as a whole than any one person.



**Winner: Small and Medium Enterprise - Rachael Price, Rachael's Carpentry Services**

Rachael is a determined and passionate site supervisor. She is devoted to sharing her time on the NAWIC Women on Tools Committee, and to help drive the Construction Skills Queensland initiative to see 11% of blue collar front line roles filled by females. Rachael is enthusiastic about being a role model, and as a person with a mental health condition, demonstrates that she will not allow anything to stop her from reaching her dreams. She uses her service dog to start conversations around mental health in the workplace, and takes the time to check in on tradies who are struggling. She would love to contribute to educating schools that a career in blue collar industries are not a lesser career path, and to help young people make better, informed decisions in their careers.



**QUEENSLAND BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION COMMISSION (QBCC) AWARD TO A YOUNG ACHIEVER**

**Winner: Large Enterprise - Mina Song, Icon Group**

Mina joined Icon Group in 2021 as a Cadet supporting the Icon New Business Team with cost planning and design support, she has since advanced to Graduate Project Coordinator onsite. She plays a crucial part in supporting the team and fulfilling various responsibilities. Mina was recently honoured with the prestigious Icon Rising Star Award at the annual internal conference held in November 2022. This accolade is presented to a Graduate or Cadet who exemplifies the core values of the Icon Group and has demonstrated exceptional business achievements. This recognition serves as a testament to Mina's dedication, hard work and commitment to upholding the values of the Icon Group while achieving remarkable results in her role.





**CORRS CHAMBERS WESTGARTH AWARD FOR DIVERSITY**

*Winner: Large Enterprise -  
Emma McCaughey, CPB Contractors*

Emma McCaughey is Bid Manager for CPB Contractors QLD & PNG Business Unit working both on submissions and tenders ranging from \$100 million to \$4 billion across both regional and metro works in Civil, Rail, Road, Dams, Water and Power. Passionate about Diversity and Inclusion in the construction industry, Emma has displayed this commitment through numerous business and industry appointments including President for NAWIC QLD Chapter and member of IAQ's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. At CPB Contractors she is the founder of the Gender Equality Action Plan Taskforce, a member of CPB's Women's Advisory Board, founding member of CPB Queensland Women in Construction Network as well as taskforce member for CPB's Return to Work Program and Women's Mentoring Committee. She is also a developer of CPB's Wellbeing Committee.



*Winner: Small and Medium Enterprise - Constructionarium Australia Ltd*

Established as a not-for-profit in July 2016, Constructionarium Australia exists to support the next generation of Infrastructure, Engineering and Construction professionals to gain skills and build networks by exposing them to a realistic and safe construction project. The eight day program, three days training and five days building, requires a team of 18 to 20 who work together to plan, tender, build and handover a project. The construction project follows real-life processes involving understanding a client brief, design, developing construction methodology, presenting their bid for the tender, then merging as one team, following the winner's tender methodology to undertake a build of a structure.



### ADCO CONSTRUCTIONS AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT AS A BUSINESS WOMAN

**Winner: Large Enterprise - Nona McCann, Tomkins Commercial & Industrial Builders**

Nona is the Head of Corporate Services at Tomkins Commercial & Industrial Builders. She has more than 20 years experience in Business Operations and Human Resources Management, and in a short period of time has proven herself to be a formidable addition to the Executive Leadership Team. In her current role, she is a champion of change and responsible for the development and digitalisation of people-related systems. Nona is an advocate for increasing female participation in construction and is committed to advancing the diversity agenda, and successfully promoting opportunities for other women.

**Winner: Small and Medium Enterprise - Melissa Millar, Women of Trades and Industry**

Melissa is the founder of Women of Trades and Industry, which is an all-female gutter cleaning crew established to provide a flexible employment environment for women wanting to trial a trade, or as a holding company employing women who want to land an apprenticeship. Women of Trades and Industry deliver several employment and finance workshops written by Melissa using her knowledge and various learning styles and focusing on employment skills trade businesses are looking for. In the future, her vision is to grow enough to support women to start their own trade businesses.



### CPB CONTRACTORS AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN CONSTRUCTION (CIVIL WORKS)

**Joint Winner: Ceinwen Hooper, GHD**

Ceinwen has over 20 years continuous experience in the Management and Administration of Civil Infrastructure, Residential and Industrial Land Development Projects and Project Management incorporating design documentation, Tender Evaluation, Construction Superintendency and Contract Administration roles. She has a comprehensive understanding of contract administration principles and construction management issues with excellent communication, liaison and management skills.

**Joint Winner: Rochan Blunt, Seymour Whyte**

Rochan Blunt is a highly accomplished Senior Proposals Coordinator at Seymour Whyte. She approaches her role within the pre contracts team with tenacity and drive, always seeking opportunities for improvement within processes and striving to create the best tenders possible. Over her 16 year career in construction, Rochan has personally hired and mentored seven women, all of whom had never worked in construction and/or bidding before. Her efforts in championing her profession and helping others establish their careers has helped many women to see construction as a viable industry to thrive in. Through these achievements, Rochan has made an indelible contribution to SW and the broader industry.



### SEYMOUR WHITE AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN HEALTH & SAFETY

**Winner: Sally Peers, John Holland**

Sally is a highly accomplished and passionate leader in the construction industry, known for her exceptional contributions to health and safety practices. As the WHS & Rail Safety Manager on the Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3 Project, she has demonstrated exemplary leadership and best practices, resulting in a significant decrease in safety incidents and the establishment of a robust safety culture. Sally is deeply passionate about championing change and paving new pathways for those following her footsteps. This is proven by promoting diversity and empowerment within her team, Sally's efforts to champion gender equality by promoting deserving females into safety related roles have been recognised and appreciated by both colleagues and industry peers.

### ACCIONA EMERGING LEADER AWARD

*Winner: Large Enterprise -  
Nadine Eccleston, ADCO Constructions*

Nadine is a highly respected Senior Construction Lawyer with proven experience in high profile matters across all aspects of the project lifecycle. In her role as Legal Counsel at ADCO Constructions, Nadine is valued by her internal and external stakeholders for her technical excellence, her personable, commercial and pragmatic approach, and her commitment to achieving best for-project outcomes. Nadine strongly believes that diversity immeasurably improves our industry and is committed to ensuring that people with varied personalities, heritages, identities and ideas flourish in construction.

*Winner: Small and Medium Enterprise -  
Shannon Kratzmann, Ardent Consulting Services*

As the Director of Ardent Consulting Practises, Shannon is not only the owner of the consultancy, but also the driving force being it's success. Shannon's ability to balance business growth, maintain the company's vision, while also managing her role as a parent, demonstrates her exceptional leadership skills and strategic vision, she has fostered a team that consistently delivers exceptional results and goes above and beyond for their clients. Shannon has a set of core values that are unshakable in the face of adversity, a work ethic that is admirable, she is unapologetically passionate and willing to stand up for herself, her work and everyone she supports.



### QUT AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN DESIGN

*Winner: Heidi Propert, CPB Contractors*

Over the past 17 years Heidi has helped deliver key South East Queensland building projects, she is currently Buildings and Stations Design Manager on the Cross River Rail RIS Project. On this project she has led key design measures in delivery of the upgraded stations, including secondary emergency egress pathways, a major innovation for a significant QR Infrastructure project. Heidi is an advocate for flexibility in the workplace and role model for aspiring engineers. As a member of CPB Contractors Queensland Women in Construction group, and champion for mothers and other staff re-entering the workforce as part of CPB's Return to Work program, Heidi hopes to inspire change through leading by example.

# 2023 NAWIC NSW

*awards for excellence*

ICC BALLROOM, SYDNEY NSW  
30TH NOVEMBER 2023



## LENLEASE CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

*Winner: Coates*

In just two years, Coates has transformed its hiring practises, introduced flexible working, revised parental leave, undertaken extensive training and created programs to support emerging female leaders. Consequently, Coates has increased its female representation and 22% of the team are women. This systemic and holistic approach has been lead by CEO Murray Vitlich, who brings his personal passion to gender diversity initiatives, but the judges chose Coates because its entire executive team are vocal advocates and champions of change.



## RICHARD CROOKES BUSINESS WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

*Winner: Cate Cowlshaw, HDR*

Regional Managing Principal and Vice President of design practise HDR, Cate Cowlshaw is a passionate and proactive advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion. Under Cate's leadership, HDR has increased its parental leave provisions and achieved 50/50 gender balance across its leadership teams, while delivering strong financial results and strengthening client relationships. Cate's influence extends beyond HDR, and she chairs the Australian Institute of Architects NSW Gender Equity Taskforce.



## MPA AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN CONSTRUCTION, REFURBISHMENT AND FITOUT

*Winner: Lilian Ghan, Johnstaff*

As skilled construction professional with more than 15 years experience in complex projects, Lilian Ghan was the project director for the upgrades of two public schools in Sydney's Chatswood. Engaged from business case inception to final handover, Lilian worked carefully with a range of stakeholders to ensure more than 3,200 students could continue to learn onsite during the construction program.



**SCENTRE GROUP AWARD FOR TEAM INNOVATION**

*Winner: John Holland NSW Submissions Team*

The largest in-house construction contractor submissions team in the state, John Holland's NSW Submissions Team is 80% female. Challenging construction industry standards by adopting flexible work hours, locations and roles, the highly skilled team has eliminated long hours and bid burnout. The commitment to building a modern workplace that prioritises wellbeing has resulted in a near 100% retention rate and a 100% shortlisting rate on bids in 2022.



**HASSELL AWARD FOR INNOVATION IN DESIGN**

*Winner: Jane Joubert, Aurecon*

A fixed budget and a hard deadline for delivery were big challenges for the Allianz Stadium Project Team. As a lead structural engineer, Jane Joubert developed digital workflows that fast-tracked the construction program and resulted in a lighter, more efficient stadium. The implementation of her design tools, among other key initiatives from the design team, meant Allianz Stadium was designed to achieve a LEED-Certified Gold Rating from the US Green Building Council.



**FERROVIAL PROJECT MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

*Winner: Kylie Bryan, Essence Project Management*

As the project manager on Sydney's six-star Capella Hotel, Kylie Bryan led the preservation and revitalisation of a landmark heritage building. Navigating complex statutory, stakeholder and cost constraints - including 20 state design review panels - with an internationally based client during COVID, Kylie demonstrated exceptional stakeholder management. This result is a reimagining of a golden sandstone icon that has been named among the best hotels in the world.



**CPB CONTRACTORS AWARD FOR CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABILITY**

*Winner: Emma Kline, CPB Contractors*

Emma Kline manages a team of 13 professionals and is responsible for sustainability on the \$1.8 billion Sydney Metro - Western Sydney Airport station boxes and tunneling project. Emma developed a technical, first of its kind process to eliminate the risk of workers coming into direct contact with contaminated groundwater during tunnel boring and construction. The process elevated safety and eliminated large volumes of personal protective equipment ending in landfill.



**ROBERTS CO AWARD FOR CONTRIBUTION TO A PROJECT'S DEVELOPMENT**

*Winner: Asuncion Ivorra, PRO Consultant*

When Asuncion Ivorra joined the Sydney Metro team as Utilities Project Manager in 2021, the project's design was already approved. After reviewing the bollards design, Asuncion identified around 200 potential clashes. Asuncion skillfully chaired 48 weekly clash analysis workshops over a year. With patience, persistence, a commitment to collaboration and out of the box solutions, Asuncion successfully managed the clash resolution process without causing delays to the construction program.



**LAING O'ROURKE FUTURE LEADER SCHOLARSHIP**

*Winner: Kate Leone, UGL*

A mechanical and mechatronics engineer, Kate Leone has already been recognised for her work on the M6 Motorway Stage 1 Project. Passionate about improving the world through engineering, Kate contributes to several not-for-profits, including Engineers Without Borders, Unbound Australia and RedR, and mentors engineering students. Her voluntary work and STEM advocacy has delivered innovative solutions to real world engineering challenges, demonstrating her ability to effect change 'beyond the day job'.



**TRANSPORT FOR NSW TRADESPERSON SCHOLARSHIP**

*Winners: Samantha Decolongon, Fredon*

An electrical apprentice with engineering firm Fredon, Samantha Decolongon met with skepticism when she made her unconventional career choice. But Samantha's genuine passion for construction has, in her own words, built her "confidence and courage".

Samantha is now an ambassador for women in trades, and her involvement in the Girls in Trade Program is inspiring other young women to pursue rewarding careers.

**TRANSPORT FOR NSW TRADESPERSON SCHOLARSHIP**

*Winners: Stacey Swetnam, Harrison's Landscaping*

After finishing her professional sporting career as a show jumping rider, Stacey Swetnam set up a successful garden maintenance business and then, with a desire to create landscapes rather than maintain them, signed on as a mature age apprentice in landscape construction. She is now inspired to "be the best tradeswoman I can be" and to empower other women to choose trades.



**ACOUSTIC LOGIC REGIONAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD**

*Winner: Ashley Barnes, Richard Crookes Construction*

A true trailblazer in the Hunter and New England region, Ashley Barnes is known for delivering projects that combine technical brilliance with innovation, as seen in the delivery of the \$109 million East End Stage 1 and heritage listed QT Hotel in Newcastle. Ashley is also a strong advocate for gender equity and has volunteers as a mentor to female high school students considering careers in property and construction.



**JOHN HOLLAND UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP**

*Winner: Hayley Samson, Daracon Group*

Hayley is a current Trainee Engineer at Daracon Group and Bachelor of Construction Management student at the University of Newcastle, on track to graduate with first class honours - something only achieved by the top 5% of students. Before getting her start in construction as a Traffic Controller, Hayley worked in a fly-in-fly-out Machine Operator role, which is what led her to further education, to try and bridge the gap between Operators and Site Engineers. Now working full time with Daracon Group's Property Division, she balances full time work and study commitments to the highest level. Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Hayley hopes to pursue a PhD in sustainable development to help future proof the Civil Construction industry.



**ADCO CHAMPION OF CHANGE**

*Winner: David Madden, MBM*

Since founding MBM in 2002, David Madden has grown the quantity surveying and advisory firm to its current 150 strong team, 40% of those women. David has a deep and abiding personal commitment to gender equality, which he has embedded into company priorities. He role models respectful behaviour, promotes an inclusive culture, and celebrates all diversity. The judges chose David from a close field for demonstrating that small organisations can achieve impressive diversity outcomes, despite their smaller budgets, when hands on leaders champion change.



# 2023 NAWIC ACT *awards for excellence*

NATIONAL ARBORETUM, CANBERRA ACT  
17TH NOVEMBER 2023

### LENLEASE CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

*Winner: Stephanie Jaros, Major Projects Canberra*

Stephanie is a Chartered Mechanical Engineer, boasting 21 years of experience and was honoured as a Fellow of Engineers Australia in 2020. Rising from a Graduate Engineer at AECOM, she excelled as a Team Leader - Building and Places ACT, overseeing a diverse team. As Practice Director for Building Services, she managed over 200 Engineers and Technicians, prioritising technical excellence and quality. Today she's a vital part of the Major Projects Canberra Theatre Redevelopment Team, actively contributing to the Canberra Theatre Redevelopment Projects. Stephanie's leadership, driven by communication and accountability, defines her commitment to excellence in mechanical engineering, leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.



### HINDMARSH ACHIEVEMENT IN DESIGN AWARD

*Winner: Katy Horswell, SQC Group*

As the interiors Principal at SQC Group, Katy demonstrated exceptional leadership skills by guiding and nurturing a team of six. Her dedication and passion have earned her Associate status early in her career. Katy plays a vital role in fostering company growth and representation, while maintaining great pride in her work. With over 12 years of experience, Katy has successfully managed a diverse range of projects, comprehending all aspects of project procurement and delivery. As an advocate for sustainability, she continuously explores innovative design materials. Katy's innate ability to understand people results in seamless team management and unparalleled client satisfaction.



### ELVIN GROUP ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGINEERING

*Winner: Karen McLellan, Social Infrastructure - Major Projects Canberra*

Karen is a Senior Project Manager with an engineering background and 10 years experience delivering ACTPS infrastructure projects. Karen completed a BHP Newcastle Fitter and Turner apprenticeship, followed by 15 years with Newcastle University as a Technical Officer. She became an Army Corporal and joined the Ambulance Service as a driver and Paramedic, before returning to engineering 10 years ago. Karen has a strong understanding of the needs and pressures involved in delivering projects and uses her collaboration, communication and management skills to build strong relationships with stakeholders based on trust and shared outcome.





**CONSTRUCTION CONTROL BUSINESS WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD**

*Winner: Sophie Lumsden, Construction Control*

Sophie is a Project Manager at Construction Control with over 14 years experience, recently delivering a \$200m logistically challenging project at the ANU. Sophie's leadership surpasses those of an ordinary Project Manager, managing a team of over 40 staff, across 30 sites. She has a passion for mentoring and development of junior staff, on this project alone mentoring more than 15 cadets. Sophie is a mother to a newborn, and currently on maternity leave demonstrating that women can have a successful career and family life.



**MONARO WINDOWS DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AWARD**

*Winner: Erin Flannery, Ventia*

Erin is the Operations Director at Ventia Project and Workplace Solutions. She has worked in the property industry for 20 years and held various senior positions within both the Government and Corporate sectors. She has extensive property and construction experience including project management, program management (PMO), contract management, procurement and lease negotiation. Erin has been involved with many high-profile Government and corporate clients ranging from program strategies to refurbishment projects across Australia.

**TSA MANAGEMENT EMERGING LEADER AWARD**

*Winner: Taylor Hoadley, Multiplex*

Inspired by her parents Earthmoving business, and work on significant Civil/Construction projects, Taylor earned her Bachelor's in Construction Management in 2020, and relocated to Canberra in 2021 to join Multiplex. Taylor is a dedicated professional in the construction industry, advancing rapidly from a Graduate to Site Engineer through continuous learning and embracing challenges. Her leadership extends to mentoring the next generation, especially women, and advocating for diversity, sustainability and innovation. Taylor's journey is marked by resilience, commitment to excellence and a passion for positive change.

**NDY INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY AWARD**

*Winner: Charne Esterhuizen, Astor Air Conditioning PTY Ltd*

Charne is a passionate individual with a go-getter attitude. She fuels her curiosity with opportunities for positive change and utilises technology where possible to improve the industry's practices toward better protecting the environment. Charne values the importance of working collaboratively and has extensive experience in the creative and design sector. She believes creativity and innovation have a significant role to play in the construction sector. Having an interest in technology, 3D printing particularly allowed Charne to teach young people about the future of tech in industries, and transition this into her business and construction business as a whole.

**BUILT LEADERSHIP IN CONSTRUCTION AWARD**

*Winner: Elise Klarenbeek, FDC*

Elise is a seasoned FDC ACT team member who boasts 13 years of local ACT construction expertise. With a strong track record as a Project Manager, Senior Project Manager, and now Operations Manager, she excels in various sectors, from government to retail. Elise prioritises fostering robust relationships with clients, contractors and stakeholders, revelling in intricate projects. Her leadership ensures projects meet budget, quality and safety expectations. In her current role, Elise imparts her exceptional skills to the FDC team, playing a vital role in local project success. A strategic thinker and respected industry member, she serves as a mentor, adept at issue prevention.

**BENMAX LEADERSHIP IN SAFETY AWARD**

*Winner: Chey Lawler, ACT Steelworks*

Chey has almost 10 years experience in the commercial industry and multiple qualifications. She is a role model to other young women in the construction industry, and would love to see the attitude of “she’ll be right, just get it done” phased out. Chey is very effective at communicating with workers on the ground, due to her mannerisms and the respect she has earned during her time in the commercial construction industry.

**JOSS GROUP MENTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD**

*Winner: John Reed, TSA Management*

John is a design and project management professional with over 30 years experience in the design management and delivery of corporate, government and residential projects. John’s experience enables him to offer sound advice through the early design and approval stages of a project. His skills in managing detailed and complex processes ensure projects stay on track and deliver the best possible outcomes for the client. His corporate management experience in the public and private sectors is underpinned by a strong customer and project delivery focus. He has a reputation for adding value to business processes in a professional and personable manner.



### PRESIDENT'S AWARD

*Winner: Tracy Wilcox, RPS*

Tracy is an integral member of NAWIC ACT, actively contributing to both the Education & Professional Development Committees. Tracy is a fierce advocate for women in the construction industry, and walks the talk. Tracy has tutored and mentored an incarcerated woman undertaking distance education and continued to support her return to the community, sourced funding to ensure students have backpacks for safety gear and more. Tracy exemplifies what it means to be a volunteer, and the industry are privileged to benefit from her selfless contributions.



### MANTEENA CAPITAL REGION STUDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD

*Winner: Kayla Hogg, Hindmarsh*

At the age of 13, Kayla recognised that the constraints of standard education modules were not for her. With a keen interest in the way the State was being shaped with new construction projects, Kayla discovered that there were alternative career pathways options for her, including apprenticeship opportunities. Fast forward to the age of 15 when Kayla started in the construction industry as an apprentice, stepping onto a live construction site - she knew she had chosen the right industry.

### CIT (CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY) TRADESWOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

*Winner: Chey Lawler, ACT Steelworks*

Chey has almost 10 years experience in the commercial industry and multiple qualifications. She is a role model to other young women in the construction industry, and would love to see the attitude of "she'll be right, just get it done" phased out. Chey is very effective at communicating with workers on the ground, due to her mannerisms and the respect she has earned during her time in the commercial construction industry.



# 2023 NAWIC VIC

*awards for excellence*

GRAND HYATT, MELBOURNE VIC  
3RD NOVEMBER 2023



### **JOHN HOLLAND CRYSTAL VISION AWARD**

*Winner: Nina McHardy, Fulton Hogan*

With over a decade of experience in the construction industry, Nina is dedicated to creating inclusive team cultures and breaking down barriers for women. Nina actively addresses bias and identifies opportunities for greater female participation in the industry. One of Nina's notable achievements is leading the development of the first women's white night-time PPE available in the Australian market. Nina is driven by values and consistently goes above and beyond her role to influence and drive positive change. She has pioneered innovative approaches to engage upcoming generations, such as educational events like 'In her Boots', which promotes construction careers. With her forward thinking vision, Nina is actively working towards creating a gender-diverse landscape for future generations.



### **ADCO CONSTRUCTIONS INDUSTRY ALLY AWARD**

*Winner: Lucas Martinez, John Holland*

Lucas is a true ally for women in the construction industry. As a migrant, he understands the challenges and experiences of being a minority in the field. He leads with empathy and works tirelessly to promote equal opportunities for everyone. In addition to promoting female employment, Lucas ensures that women have flexible work arrangements to accommodate their family and personal needs. He is determined to make sure their hard work and exceptional performance are acknowledged and recognised by others in the industry.



**LENDLEASE PROJECT DELIVERY AWARD**

*Winner: Lucy Flanders, Roberts Co*

Skilled Project Manager and Team Leader Lucy Flanders has been working on CSL Melbourne. This impressive 23 story building is a modern research and laboratory facility located in a diverse and high-end workplace. The project faced several challenges, including the unique design of a vertical laboratory, unexpected issues with trade partners going out of business, delays in overseas procurement due to Covid, and the voluntary administration of Probuild, which caused a two week pause in the project. Despite these challenges, Lucy showed exceptional leadership by managing the obstacles and keeping the team motivated. As a result, the project was successfully completed, delivering a cutting edge research facility in the heart of Melbourne’s Biomedical District.



**ROBERTS CO DESIGN AWARD**

*Winner: Maria Terzakis, CYP Design & Construction*

Maria has played a crucial role in overseeing the most extensive and integrated Electromagnetic Compatibility design process ever undertaken in Australia’s infrastructure history. The process ensures the effective implementation of various measures to mitigate electromagnetic interference for the project and its surrounding environment as the project is situated near important biomedical and educational institutions that house equipment sensitive to electromagnetic interference. Using comprehensive modelling, innovative mitigation strategies and adherence to strict standards, Maria has successfully ensured the compatibility of the railway with sensitive equipment and environments.



**MIRVAC BUSINESSWOMAN AWARD**

*Winner: Jackie Aggett, SPARK North East Link Tunnels D&C*

As the Commercial Director for the NEL Tunnels Project, Jackie has been crucial in ensuring the success of the project by setting new standards for project delivery. Jackie’s leadership has earned the admiration of clients, and created a positive work environment. Her commitment to inclusivity and gender-neutral language has increased employee satisfaction and promoted better teamwork.



**BUILT COMMUNICATION, STAKEHOLDER & MEDIA MANAGEMENT AWARD**

*Winner: Jemma Walshe, Fulton Hogan*

Jemma’s passion is for building connections between projects and the communities they serve, leading innovation programs that focus on community needs and positive outcomes. She strongly believes that by prioritising meaningful engagement with the communities we work in, we can leave a lasting and positive impact, attract more people to the industry, retain existing workers and enhance its reputation. Jemma’s dedication to community centric practices aims to create a better future for all involved.



**CPB CONTRACTORS HEALTH, SAFETY, ENVIRONMENTAL & QUALITY ASSURANCE AWARD**

*Winner: Tracey Mitchell, CYP Design & Construction*

Tracey founded the Women in Construction Group, which provides a safe and inclusive space for women in blue collar roles to share their experiences, concerns and challenges they face at work and in their personal lives. The group also helps women access resources, training, mentorship, networking opportunities, leadership development and career advancement. As a result, women at CYP Design & Construction feel more confident in speaking up and taking action in various scenarios related to safety, injuries, equipment failures or other challenges, contributing to a safer and more productive workplace.



**ACCIONA SUSTAINABILITY AWARD**

*Winner: Roselli Hedditch, Deakin University*

Roselli played a significant role in incorporating sustainability objectives into Deakin University’s Design Standards for Facilities. Recognising the conflicting priorities of sustainability and project management, Roselli developed a process called SBE (Sustainable Built Environment) that allows for early consideration of sustainability goals and offers a more flexible implementation and delivery approach. By overcoming challenges and minimising administrative tasks, the SBE process streamlines tasks, meetings, project reviews and construction handovers.

### SYMAL GROUP EMERGING LEADER AWARD

*Winner: Beck Ricardo, Icon*

With a strong desire to bring about change in the industry, Beck focuses on two main areas. Firstly, she aims to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for women in onsite project role. Secondly, she strives to manage structural operations using innovative construction methods that prioritise safety, quality and sustainability. Currently, Beck works as a Structure Supervisor at Icon's Seafarers Development in Docklands.

Despite her significant responsibilities and risks involved in her role, she always finds time to support and mentor the next generation of women in construction.



### SEYMOUR WHYTE TRADESPERSON OR APPRENTICE AWARD

*Winner: Zoe Luby, Lendlease*

Zoe is an amazing third-year apprentice at Lendlease who impressed everyone with her natural skills, enthusiasm and technical abilities. In 2021, Zoe became a part of the Lendlease Apprenticeship Program, previously completing pre-apprenticeships in Electrotechnology and Carpentry, showcasing her eagerness to learn and diversify her skills. Zoe is not only focused on excelling in her role, but also on encouraging more women to join the construction industry. She's actively involved in voluntary work and advocacy to inspire and support other women who dream of pursuing careers in this field.



### MULTIPLEX YOUNG ACHIEVER AWARD

*Winner: Ellen Warren, Built*

Ellen is a Graduate Project Coordinator at Built, and played a crucial role in the successful implementation of the Crate of Kindness initiative. This involved establishing a comprehensive framework, building relationships with stakeholders, procuring and managing supplies, and efficiently organising a team of volunteers to deliver and install furniture in the homes of women and children seeking refuge from domestic violence.

Because of her efforts, 319 furniture items have been rescued to date. Ellen's leadership has been instrumental in the initiatives success, illustrating her commitment to creating positive change in the communities she serves.



# 2023 NAWIC TAS *awards for excellence*

GLEN ALBYN ESTATE, TAROONA TAS  
3RD NOVEMBER 2023



### CLENNETTS MITRE 10 CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

*Joint Winner: Catherine Lopy, Taswater*

Catherine Lopy, as a joint recipient of the Crystal Vision Award, demonstrated community-orientated leadership, alongside her outstanding professional achievements as a Project Manager for Taswater. Catherine's collaborative work with Jobs Tasmania and BEST reflects her dedication to fostering a more inclusive and diverse construction industry. Her role as a mentor to recent graduates within Taswater demonstrates her commitment to fostering a supportive environment that promotes the advancement of women.

*Joint Winner: Stephanie Gee, Gee Electrical*

Stephanie has an astute understanding of the need for grassroots change, particularly in a sector where the majority of businesses are small scale. As an industry leader, Stephanie is making meaningful contributions to energy policy. She is passionate about innovation and the critical role that her industry plays in our nations shift towards renewable energy consumption. As a mentor, her guidance has led to remarkable achievements among her mentees, and her dedication fostering an inclusive environment and promoting the role of women sets a commendable standard in the pursuit of gender equality and professional advancement within the construction sector.



### COOKE AND DOWSETT (ROSETTA PLUMBING) ACHIEVEMENT BY A TRADESPERSON AWARD WINNER + NAWIC NATIONAL NEXT STEP SCHOLARSHIP

*Winner: Jade Carluccio, Vos Construction*

Jade's approach to embracing challenges with perseverance and courage has positioned her as a role model for women considering a career in construction and paved the way for significant improvements within the industry. Jade's proactive approach to advocating for change and her relentless pursuit of industry improvements for women has seen her become a mentor to other young females entering the industry. Her perseverance, advocacy and dedication to her craft has set a commendable standard. Jade is a forward-thinking and promising professional.



### ST JOSEPHS AFFORDABLE HOUSING EMERGING TALENT AWARD

*Winner: Yanina Gross, CPB Contractors*

Through her role as a Site Engineer on the Henderson Dam \$17m upgrade, Nina demonstrated exceptional dedication, initiative, courage, problem solving skills and leadership qualities. She not only ensured the projects timely completion and high standards, but also actively engaged with the local community and supported local contractors. Alongside this, she volunteered with the Beacon Foundation to inspire young individuals, making a substantial impact on the industry and community.



### BRICKWORKS BUILDING PROJECTS CONTRIBUTION TO DESIGN AWARD

*Winner: Harriet Kossman, XSquared Architects*

Harriet's integral role in the Peacock Centre Redevelopment project demonstrated her exceptional expertise from conceptual design through construction, successfully bridging the gap between client expectations and user suggestions. Her dedication to sound design practices, innovative interior solutions and commitment to sustainability have revitalised vital mental health services while preserving historical heritage.

### VOS CONSTRUCTION CONTRIBUTION TO A PROJECT OR ORGANISATIONAL AWARD

*Winner: Hannah Yap, McConnell Dowell*

Hannah demonstrated exceptional contributions to the construction of the Bridge Water Bridge Project in her role as Environmental Engineer through innovation and leadership. Her dedication to preserving and promoting environmental sustainability has encompassed a comprehensive approach, including the consideration of cultural and built heritage, along with the broader environmental landscape. Her commitment to education and proactive approach in addressing environmental issues has resulted in a positive cultural shift within the organisation, with increased awareness and reporting. Her ambition to create a positive environmental legacy extends beyond the projects immediate scope.

### CPB CONTRACTORS ACHIEVEMENT IN CONSTRUCTION AWARD

*Winner: Sophie Feltrin, CPB Contractors*

Sophie's exceptional leadership and expertise were instrumental in overcoming numerous challenges, including workforce constraints and complex technical issues ensuring the project's success. Her ability to make rapid and informed decisions, control costs through effective team supervision, and foster a collaborative environment contributed to the projects completion significantly under budget, on schedule, with minimal disruptions, and with improved water quality for customers.



# 2023 NAWIC NT

*awards for excellence*

MINDIL BEACH CASINO RESORT, DARWIN NT  
27TH JULY 2023



### JOHNNY COOL AIR-CONDITIONING & ELECTRICAL CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

*Winner: Jessie Risk, AKJ Services*

Jessie is a proud Larrakia woman, a mother and the Founder and Managing Director of AKJ Services. She has the passion and drive to create a business culture that is breaking cycles and stereotypes within women in male dominated industries. AKJ Services proudly engages talented women, making up 20% of her employees. Jessie acts as a role model, regularly speaking to girls from the STARS Aboriginal girls' academies to talk about potential careers in construction and breaking down barriers, employing girls directly from these programs in after school roles. She has provided paid opportunities for young Aboriginal women in marketing, administration, safety, reporting, laboring, landscaping and more.



### MCMAHONS SERVICES TRADESWOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

*Winner Soraya Smith, TEC Automation*

Soraya is a proud Indigenous woman, a mother of three young children, and successful Owner and Director of TEC Automation. Soraya's commitment to creating opportunities for underrepresented groups has helped build a more diverse and skilled workforce at TEC, and a stronger, more inclusive industry overall.



### BTC CONSTRUCTION OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN CONSTRUCTION AWARD

*Winner: Ana Maria Henao, Lendlease*

Ana Maria is a Construction Manager for Lendlease, currently working on a multi-billion dollar project for Defense at RAAF Base Tindal. Changing the project outcomes through proactive, innovative solutions is something Ana is known for. A colleague describes Ana as "a driven and approachable leader who is solutions focused and ultimately gets results for her project team, subcontractors and client". With a list of success stories behind her, we can't wait to see what her future holds.

### DOWNER LEADERSHIP AND MENTORING AWARD

*Winner Leisha Armstrong, Johnny Cool*

Leisha is the sole Director of Johnny Cool Darwin and takes pride in being 100% female owned. As a supportive mentor, she aims to empower women in her industry, not only by setting an example of what is possible but also by providing a work environment where they feel valued and supported. Leisha wants to demonstrate that being a mother and a business Director is not only achievable, but also deeply rewarding. Her commitment to fostering a positive and inclusive workplace serves as an inspiration to other women looking to thrive in their professional and personal roles.



### GTNT GROUP TRAINEE, APPRENTICE OR STUDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD

*Winner Savanah Pagel, NTEX*

Savanah is a driven, young, Indigenous woman who is pursuing the Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations. With a background in diesel fitting, and a passion for heavy machinery, she quickly advanced from a laboring role to Excavator Operator at NTEX. Savanah seeks to mentor and empower Indigenous youth in their careers and her aspiration is to be a leader advocating for sustainability, promoting recycling and resource recovery to minimise environmental impact.



### INTRACT ACHIEVEMENT BY INDIGENOUS WOMAN AWARD

*Winner: Jessie Risk, AKJ Services*

Jessie founded AKJ Services, a self-funded Civil Construction company, driven by her passion to challenge stereotypes and empower women. She actively engages in providing opportunities for fellow business owners, advocates for Aboriginal women in business, and serves as a mentor in the NT Indigenous Business Network (NTIBN) Aboriginal Business Hub. Through her company, she employs and mentors young Aboriginal women, breaking barriers and promoting diversity in the construction sector.



**TURNER TOWNSEND EMERGING TALENT FOR OFFICE PROFESSIONAL AWARD**

*Winner: Rebecca Karageorgiou, NTEX*

Rebecca joined NTEX in 2021 as a Trainee Accounts Officer and has since earned her promotion to the role of Account Office in 2023. Rebecca has made her mark outside of the accounts department by identifying waste streams, and researching recycling opportunities, setting up the Office Resource Recovery and Recycling System. Rebecca has implemented substantial improvements to the plant maintenance system. These enhancements significantly reduce machinery breakdowns, downtime, and operational costs.



**ECOZ ACHIEVEMENT IN HEALTH, SAFETY AND/OR ENVIRONMENT AWARD**

*Winner: Stephanie Hudson*

Steph is a seasoned safety professional with 15 years of experience, dedicated to promoting safety and environmental protection in the Northern Territory. Her expertise lies in obtaining accreditations such as ISO, and Federal Accreditation for organisations. Steph's primary focus is on ensuring compliance and cultivating a positive safety culture within the companies she collaborates with. Her impressive record of success has earned her the respect of her peers, making her an industry leader and inspiration to others in the safety profession.

**BARPA SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND/OR DIVERSITY AWARD**

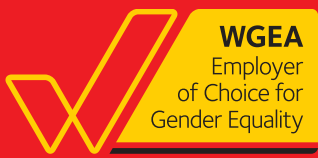
*Winner: Team Tindal, RAAF Base Project, Lendlease*

The RAAF Base Tindal Project is a multi-billion dollar, staged, long term investment by the Australian Government and the program of work being undertaken by Lendlease represents a series of major projects to enhance air combat capability in Australia's northern region. Some but not all notable achievements include:

- A 30% female to male ratio
- Annual 'Try a Trade expo's
- The 'Future Tradies Program'
- 'Working on Country' an induction video explaining the importance of place to First Nations People
- 13.8% Indigenous participation versus 4% target.

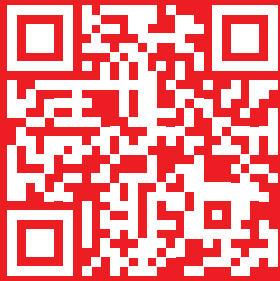


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# 2023 NAWIC SA

*awards for excellence*

JACKSON SQUARE, HINDMARSH SA  
10TH NOVEMBER 2023



### LENLEASE CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

*Winner: Alice Pryor, Hansen Yuncken*

Since joining Hansen Yuncken in 2014, Alice has worked on complex construction projects, establishing herself as a Defence Industry Specialist. Alice is a tireless advocate for advancing and promoting the careers of women in construction coupled with a fair and more equitable workplace and industry. She is a key member of the Hansen Yuncken Women in Construction Committee, a vocal advocate for inclusive workspaces, and is considered a leader and mentor.



### BADGE EMERGING LEADER AWARD

*Winner: Kate Lally, GHD Design*

After graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering with Honours, Kate started her career at GHD in 2019. Kate chaired the Young Professional Committee for two financial terms and as a passionate Civil Engineer, she advocates for STEM careers through WISC Programs to advance diversity within the industry. Kate is the Customer Relationships Manager for key clients, where she leads teams to deliver a consistent company approach to all project work. Outside of work, Kate is a leader at her local surf lifesaving club as a Patrol Captain and Membership Committee Member to advance the safety policies to protect beach goers.



### SHAPE CONTRIBUTION TO DESIGN AWARD

*Winner: Emily Quinton, Lendlease*

Emily is a Senior Services Engineer with Lendlease on the new Women's and Children's Hospital. With over 15 years of experience in the construction industry, Emily's expertise is in managing services design and delivery. On the New WCH Project, her contribution to the redesign of the concept by leading the services design team has already led to exceptional outcomes for the client with a focus on program.



**BUILT CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AWARD**

*Winner: Yaara Plaves, Hames Sharley*

An Architect and Associate Director at Hames Sharley, Yaara is leading the shift to regenerative design in the construction industry. She heads the National Sustainability Forum at Hames Sharley, updates industry sustainability practices through educational workshops and her range of leadership roles in committees. Always passionate, Yaara takes as many opportunities as possible to encourage stakeholders to think about how regenerative design works in practice. Her efforts have improved Hames Sharley and inspires change in companies connected to the construction industry. Her dedication fosters a more sustainable, regenerative future for the world.



**MYKRA PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

*Winner: Julia Gentile, Charter Hall*

Development Manager at Charter Hall, Julia's involvement in the notable Adelaide commercial precinct, 60 King William has been significant. Julia managed the day-to-day progress, quality, financial, leasing and tenant activities on behalf of Charter Hall. Beyond this, her achievements within the industry speak volumes, from her tenure as previous President of NAWIC SA, recipient of a UDIA Award and active participation in mentorship – Julia represents a true advocate for the growth of female participation within our industry.



**ENERVEN GRADUATE OF THE YEAR AWARD**

*Winner: Sarah Burton, Hames Sharley*

Sarah joined Hames Sharley as a Student of Architecture in 2021. With lived experience from a traumatic childhood, Sarah has deep empathy for a sense of place and understands the importance of home and community. Sarah's strong artistic background including painting, drawing, graphic design and creative writing, all help to drive her enthusiasm for architecture and assist in successful outcomes for both architectural projects and her personal freelance work. With this strong passion for social equity, and the desire to bring this through the built realm, Sarah has been involved in various groups of positive social change and aims to work towards ensuring a better future for those experiencing difficulties or who are less fortunate. Sarah's dedication contributes to a more inclusive and supportive architectural field.



**WGA BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL AWARD**

*Winner: Jessica MacDonald, Yanun Project Services*

Jessica is a dynamic leader with an established reputation within the industry. As Director of Client Strategy for Aurecon's Multinational Market and Clients team, and Co-Founder of groundbreaking project management startup Yanun Project Services, she has demonstrated decisive, innovative, and ethically conscientious business leadership. Active in the Project Services industry through multiple boards and committees, Jessica contributes to gender equality initiatives and works to create employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.



# 2023 NAWIC WA *awards for excellence*

CROWN BALLROOM, PERTH WA  
3RD NOVEMBER 2023



### SWAN GROUP CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

*Winner: Kathryn Born, ECA WA*

From her humble beginnings as an electrical apprentice 22 years ago, to her impactful role at Electrical Group Training (EGT), Kat is a force to be reckoned with. Kat envisions an industry where opportunities are not dictated by gender. From navigating motherhood during her apprenticeship, to challenging gender biases as a business owner, her commitment is fueled by innovative solutions. Kat consistently forges her path in a sector where women only represent 2-4% of the workforce. Her role at EGT inspires the next generation of female electricians, advocating inclusivity and emphasising the importance of women in trades.



### CURTIN UNIVERSITY EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

*Winner: Leigh Penney, Laing O'Rourke*

### TBH OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN CONSTRUCTION AWARD

*Winner: Leigh Penney, Laing O'Rourke*

Leigh is a trailblazer leading Laing O'Rourke's Sustainability and Innovations, exemplifying both professional leadership and personal dedication in the construction industry. As the only female leader on the MELconnx Alliance Management Team, and a busy mother of two, Leigh has successfully navigated an almost exclusively female team to breakthroughs in innovation and construction. Her leadership on prominent infrastructure projects has not only showcased professional excellence, but has also driven personal dedication to sustainability, advocating for a more sustainable future and shares her knowledge generously.



### RPS TRADESWOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

*Winner: Megan Larson, DT Infrastructure*

Megan's journey is nothing short of remarkable – transitioning from a 15-year career in financial insurance to a new path within rail track protection in a traditionally male dominated industry. Megan has become a beacon of excellence, her methods have not only elevated safety standards but also inspired confidence across teams. Her dedication, communication skills, decisive actions and personal resilience have earned her widespread respect, with her responsibilities going beyond theoretical knowledge, encompassing the practical implementation of rules and procedures to safeguard a myriad of workers.





**HASELL EMERGING TALENT AWARD**

*Winner: Dana Crier, Aurecon*

Dana is a mechanical engineer, who joined Aurecon in 2020, and in a remarkable short time, has left an indelible mark on WA's construction landscape. Dana is a catalyst for industry improvement, as the Chair of Aurecon's Graduate Committee, she's been a driving force behind events that promote intergenerational exchange. Dana's leadership extends to co-leading a trial learning program for aspiring project managers alongside Aurecon's head of major projects (WA), led by Dana and her team of give, it will now be rolled out as an ongoing training course, showcasing her visionary approach to professional development.

**WBA WA FEMALE BUILDERS SCHOLARSHIP**

*Winner: Srimin Perera*



**BUILT CREATING THE BEST PROJECT AWARD**

*Winner: Jennifer Brown, Built*

Jennifer is a standout Project Coordinator at Built and is the driving force behind the transformative \$76 million Cottesloe Redevelopment Stage 1BC project. Jennifer's unique combination of risk management, detailed planning and collaboration has been foundational in shaping an extraordinary heritage outcome. Her enthusiasm and expertise in managing the complex heritage restoration has been nothing short of remarkable, and her leadership has been instrumental in navigating the challenges presented.

**STANTEC DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AWARD**

*Winner: Belinda Wong, Laing O' Rourke*

Belinda brings 16 years of experience as a construction law specialist, guiding clients through pivotal construction and resources projects, both nationally and globally. Belinda champions cultural diversity, investing personal hours into events and activism, crafting insightful events highlights refugees and immigrants, gendered caregiving burdens, LGBTIQ+ rights and more. She provides mentoring through the UWA Blackstone Society amongst many other committee roles. Belinda's dedication to supporting others is unwavering.





**CONNECT SITE SERVICES BUSINESS & LEADERSHIP AWARD**

*Winner: Kate James, DT Infrastructure*

As a Project Manager at DT Infrastructure, Kate is currently making waves on the Rio Tinto networks re-rail project. Kate's dedication knows no bounds as she seamlessly balances FIFO work and family life. Kate has been a true catalyst for transformative change management processes, bringing a positive impact on safety and productivity. Her client-focused approach has not only solidified the company's industry reputation, but also led to the expansion on the project. Her financial acumen ensured profitability, while her open communication style of leadership has transformed project outcomes and organisational culture.



**ACCIONA ACHIEVEMENT IN HEALTH, SAFETY & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AWARD**

*Winner: Jackie Graham, IPS Management Consultants*

Jackie has been a driving force behind the success of Bunbury Outer Ring Road Project. With degrees in Social Work, Psychology and more than 25 years experience, her role as a Mental Health First Aid Facilitator and Trainer has fostered a culture of empathy, enhancing team wellbeing. Jackie's leadership in the Yaka Dandjoo Program truly stands out – this transformative initiative for sustainable employment in construction has seen over 165 graduates, with an impressive 60% being Aboriginal and female participants. Jackie has transformed lives, offering hope, financial stability and critical life skills resulting in the employment of over 90 Yaka Dandjoo participants in the BORR Projects, many of whom continue to thrive in the industry today.



**ADCO CONSTRUCTIONS TRAINEE, APPRENTICE OR STUDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD**

*Winner: Lottie Edwards, ADCO*

Lottie Edwards joined ADCO Constructions in March 2022 as their first ever First Year Undergraduate Cadet. In her work, Lottie is often described as a young achiever. Lottie's proactive nature is evident – from promoting workplace culture to planning ADCO's International Women's Day event. As Deputy State Representative for Women of ADCO, and member of the NAWIC Education Committee, Lottie is pioneering initiatives to introduce more women to the construction industry. Her volunteer work with the Ronald McDonald House and 'Inspiring the Future Australia' highlights her commitment to community and youth.

**we** connect





# THE M7-M12 INTEGRATION PROJECT

## PUTS FLEX INTO ACTION



It's 8:45am – and Samantha Philliponi has just joined a pre-start meeting on the M7-M12 Integration project in Western Sydney.

Something rarely seen in the industry, the additional pre-start meeting has helped Samantha, a construction apprentice, spend the first part of her day with her child before commencing her day's work on-site.

"It's something I never thought I'd be able to do in this industry – balance my responsibilities at home and start my workday when it suits me, while making sure I'm not missing out on the opportunity to provide for my family and enjoy a life in construction," she said.

And Samantha isn't alone on-site.

She's one of 11 graduates from an industry-leading employment initiative developed by John Holland, helping to kickstart the careers of women in construction in Western Sydney as part of the M7-M12 Integration project.

There are participants transitioning from other industries – including some who have never been exposed to construction before.

"Every person who's been involved in this program has been supportive from the day we first stepped foot on-site. We have a great community," Samantha said.

So, what makes this pre-employment program different? Participants are offered full time, permanent employment at the commencement of their four-week training program, starting on the M7-M12 Integration project.

That means participants become *direct* John Holland employees while undertaking pre-employment activities, preparing them for an apprenticeship in civil construction, on a critical infrastructure project for Western Sydney.

Stefanie Nutt, People and Culture Director, M7-M12 Integration project, said the program has innovation at its core.

"We wanted to offer something new to the construction industry – a program that supported career development while also providing that level of flexibility that often our site-based workforce misses out on," Stefanie said.

"We know that the attraction and retention of women in our industry is impacted due to early start times. A typical workday on site would start

at 6:45am, and this program introduces a work roster that allows the opportunity to balance both work and life commitments through a start time of 8:45am."

By supporting permanent employment, it enables job security for participants, and opens the program up to a greater pool of candidates, particularly those who are transitioning from other industries.

"What we didn't predict is how incredibly popular it would be. Our graduates came from a massive group of 400 program applicants – all of them based in Western Sydney. I think this shows the power of a program that is seeking to change the game," Stefanie said.





“Plus they then get to work on this incredible project and know they played a part in building the connection to the new Western Sydney Airport”.

The first of its kind, the program provides participants with the same benefits that any other direct John Holland employee receives. It’s part of John Holland’s broader *Flex from the Start* initiative supported by the NSW Government’s Women in Construction Industry Innovation Program.

Samantha’s fellow graduates like Sonali Seneviratne, who comes from a retail background, said the program is breaking down barriers.

“I’ve always known that construction has been primarily a male-dominated industry and it’s good to know that this program offers great flexibility for women to enter the workforce in construction,” Sonali said.

The program directly supports the NSW Government’s goal to increase the number of women in trade and non-traditional construction roles. The M7-M12 Integration project now has 27 per cent representation of women in blue collar positions.

For working parents like Samantha, the pre-employment program has opened up new possibilities.

“If you’re sitting behind a screen right now thinking of joining construction – do it. It’s an amazing industry. You don’t have to be a mother to join a program like this, you just have to be committed,” Samantha said.

### **A new era of flexibility in construction**

John Holland’s *Flex from the Start* initiative is all about trialling and evaluating different approaches to working flexibly to break down barriers.

Beyond the M7-M12 Integration project, the company has been able to roll out and evaluate flexible working initiatives on other building and public transport projects.

John Holland has been able to share lessons learnt with the aim of improving gender equality across the industry.

Chief People Officer, Sarah Elliott, said John Holland was focused on innovating to create positive change.

“Flex from the Start is all about changing hearts and minds so we can drive greater participation and career progression in construction,” Sarah said.

“This sort of innovation is something construction has been slow to embrace, and we’re proud to see our projects leading from the front.”

Other initiatives being trialled as part of *Flex from the Start* include:

- Role modelling flexibility in monthly meetings.
- Having a roster for when people leave early one day a week.
- Regular 1:1 flexibility conversations between employees and managers.
- Rolling out special training resources to managers so they can build greater confidence and trust.
- Trialling different work weeks and working patterns.

“This is change in action for our industry – and we’ve proven what’s possible. I can’t wait to see how the initiative develops across John Holland into the future,” Sarah said.

# GANI YIRRA

## A WORK SHIRT SYMBOLISING STRENGTH, RESILIENCE, & UNITY TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When Michael Grundon connected with Melisa Drummond-Anderson at an Indigenous networking event, Michael was impressed with Melisa's courage as she opened up and shared stories of past relationships and the impact they have had on her identity as a person and as a mother. "This narrative, coupled with her strength and resilience, inspired me to contribute further to supporting individuals in our community who face domestic and family violence regularly. It was from this inspiration that the concept of the Gani Yirra purple work shirt emerged."

Michael, a proud Aboriginal man who is a descendant of the Kabi Kabi, Wakka Wakka and Koa tribes, is the Co-Founder and Managing Director of GaWun Supplies - an organisation that creates and provides unique, Indigenous designed uniforms and PPE, that aims to create awareness of the Australian Indigenous culture while strengthening the connection between corporations and country.

Melisa Drummond-Anderson is a Nywaigi Woman, Gumulaig from Urpi Kigu Peoyadh Ras/Mabuyag Island, Torres Strait with heritage leading back to America Samoa. She is the Co-Founder and Managing Director of BLAQ DIAMOND'S Women Empowerment whose mission is to increase economic empowerment opportunities and equality for First Nations Women by providing educational support and tools to increase their chances of competing on equal standing to their non-Indigenous counterparts across the nation, while improving their overall health and wellbeing.

These two incredible people came together to develop the Gani Yirra workshirt for the purpose of promoting awareness and the struggles within Indigenous Communities, and showing support against domestic violence. Their campaign is an active and upfront stance against domestic violence, taking important and necessary steps toward further education, doing their part to reducing the high rates by the way of a purple Indigenous hi-vis shirt.

By purchasing these Indigenous designed purple work shirts, individuals will not only be making a statement, but also actively contributing to the financial support and empowerment of

Indigenous women facing domestic violence through our charity partner Challenge DV, a domestic and family violence prevention organisation.

The amazing artist Sharaya Summers - Mandingalbay Yidinji and Birrigubba Woman provided the following context for the inspiration and design. The intricate design serves as a poignant symbol of the women who have been profoundly affected by the harrowing issue of domestic violence. The lines adorned with 'U' symbols intricately convey the painful entrapment experienced by those ensnared within the vicious cycle of abuse, mirroring their struggles and the difficult path toward freedom and recovery. We have named the shirt Gani Yirra (Ga Ni Yi Rra) North (Gani) representing moving forward and Seed (Yirra) as in planting the seed.

NAWIC QLD is supporting Michael and Melisa by providing them with a platform to share Melisa's story and promote the Gani Yirra workshirt to the broader industry as together we can make a difference. This message is amplified by the Gani Yirra ambassadors who are encouraging the Australian building, construction, infrastructure and mining industries to:

"Join us in breaking the cycle of domestic violence by wearing these shirts proudly, starting conversations and becoming advocates for change within our communities."

You can buy your shirt from @gawunsupplies, \$10 per shirt will be donated directly to the Challenge DV Public Fund which emphasises awareness and education to prevent domestic and family violence.

If you or someone you know needs support, contact the National Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service at 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) or visit [1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au).

*Radmila Desic*

AM FAIB. NAWIC Life Member



# MADDIE TYLER

## FINDING MY PASSION AS A MATURE AGE APPRENTICE

In late 2020, I decided I wanted more in my career and was after a change. I finished high school in 2002, and spent the last 18 years working within various sectors from retail to sales management. I never thought I was academic enough to start university, but in 2010 I started studying a Bachelor of Fine Art and Visual Culture - graduating four years later.

As the years went by I always felt there was something missing regarding my vocation, I really wanted to make a career for myself utilising my artistic side, whilst also doing hands on work. By 2021 I had considered so many career avenues and couldn't settle- one day I saw an advertised position for an apprentice signwriter- not knowing much about the industry I did some research; I didn't find many women working within the signage sector, I also looked at what typical signs shops did and thought - what a cool career this could make.

I must admit, at the time, it felt very daunting working in a male dominated environment. When I first started in the company I was one of two females working in production, and there were ten males - it did feel a little overwhelming. I felt I had to work harder, and push myself more to show I deserved to be there. My company has been a great help during the completion of my apprenticeship, and they never made me feel anything but respected and supported.

I had no idea how taking the leap and doing an apprenticeship, especially being matured age, would change my life and career. Fast forward three years and I've completed my Certificate III in Signs and Graphics; becoming a trade qualified sign writer, whilst also taking on the role of Head of Production at my current company. I really wanted to prove not only to myself, but to others that females can work in the construction industry and be just as driven in hands on positions.



I recently applied for the QLD Training Awards and have been shortlisted to the top three for the Metropolitan Region. I think it would be a fantastic opportunity to be recognised and to help encourage other females to pursue roles in the construction industry. I have also started studying a Certificate IV in Project Management Practice whilst simultaneously studying a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. I really enjoy studying as a means of personal growth, I never want to settle and aim to develop on my skills as much as I can.

*Maddie Tyler.*



# INVESTING IN WOMEN

It wasn't that long ago that seeing a woman on a construction site was such a rare occurrence that most would have assumed she was the company secretary delivering paperwork or morning tea! As a specialist recruiter for the construction industry with over 15 years experience; it has been exciting to watch, and be part of the evolution of our once very male dominated industry.

Reflecting back to when I first started, construction work and the industry itself was typically seen as masculine, leading to fewer women pursuing careers in construction. Women were significantly under-represented and more likely to be employed in administrative or support roles rather than in skilled trades or management positions. There was a notable pay gap between men and women, with women traditionally earning much less than their male counterparts for similar roles, as well as often being overlooked for higher paying positions. As a result, there were few visible female role models in leadership positions within the industry, making it difficult for aspiring women to envision themselves succeeding in the field.

Women faced multiple challenges in both entering the industry and career advancement, as well as day to day battles with sexism, harassment and the lack of basic needs such as appropriate facilities. Changes had to be made, and whilst there's still a long way to go, there are now more women in the industry - and joining than ever before - so how do we keep the momentum going?

The 2024 theme for International Women's Day was 'Invest in Women'.

- Invest in training, development and support. Women are willing and able - why only consider them for lower grade or non physical roles?
- Invest in policies to address the gender pay gap. Our industry has the highest median pay gap across the board according to the latest data from WGEA. Let's encourage change through policies such as equal pay for equal time. With the long working hours in construction, can employers adjust hours



and be more flexible? This might help attract more women to the industry, and keep them long term!

- Invest in processes that will reduce inappropriate behaviour and provide consequences for sexism and harassment. Processes that are respected and enforced so that women will feel supported in calling it out.
- Invest in culture and encourage diversity in leadership by actively recruiting and promoting women into leadership positions. Provide more opportunities for women in management of technical roles such as Project Director and Construction Manager, not just the operational side of the business.

And finally, invest in your recruiter! Partner with recruiters that take the time to understand your business needs and culture so that the best candidates can be presented first time round, saving you time and getting your roles filled faster.

With new projects and developments on the go, and changes to policies and practices that target gender equality creating change - it's exciting to see the opportunity for growth and advancement for women in construction.

*Kylie Jasinski*  
Director - Prime Recruitment

# THE PIER HOLE PROTECTOR

## AN INTERNATIONALLY PATENTED SAFETY COVER FOR OPEN EXCAVATIONS

After spending 15 years as a Business Development Manager and being married to a carpenter, I decided to complete a Builder's License to enable us to start our own building company. This was my first experience in the construction industry! In 2015, once the license was granted, I started a small family-owned construction company. This venture led to the development of a crucial new safety product, The Pier Hole Protector, which I deemed a necessity.

Three separate incidents onsite drove me to find a solution for covering holes. First, during a home build on a residential street, 50 foundation holes were left open for the weekend. Despite the site being fenced and displaying danger signs, it wouldn't prevent a child from jumping the fence and falling into a hole. The second incident involved a job with 25 foundation holes covered with plywood, yet we still received a fine because plywood is not weight-rated or properly secured. Lastly, we lost over \$20,000 on a granny flat project because our holes filled with water two days in a row, causing them to collapse and needing to be completely redone.

Digging holes is a part of the initial stage of nearly all construction work, including residential, commercial, renewable energy, mining, farming, and fencing projects. If these holes are not properly covered, there is significant risk of people, animals, rubbish, and debris falling in. workers often used plywood, scrap materials, old pallets, or simply left the holes open. None of these options comply with WHS regulations, and none are safe.

In my personal research, I discovered a devastating story about a man who lost his life trying to retrieve his dog from a hole on a residential construction site. This tragedy prompted me to search globally for a compliant product, but I found nothing available on the market.

In mid-2018, I set out to develop a solution to the problem—a journey that was exciting, stressful, expensive, and very eye-



opening, all while still working full-time. In 2020, I launched a world-first design: The Pier Hole Protector, which came in a 600mm diameter cover. Around this time, I crossed paths with Patrick Cormack from Cormack Concreting. He was so impressed with the product that he offered to support me in promoting it to the industry while also using it on all his job sites. Pat and I have worked together ever since, and he organically became my Managing Business Partner.

Due to the success and demand, we launched the 900mm version in 2023. I made the big decision to leave my full-time job and steady income to focus on EPS Worldwide and its expansion. Fast forward to 2024, and our product is now available all over Australia, Canada, the USA, and the UK.

*Luisa Stewart*

Founder & Managing Director of EPS WorldWide Pty Ltd

# Q&A WITH ISABELLA SPINOLO

## PAVING THE WAY FOR WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

*Q: Isabella, can you tell us about your introduction to the construction and property industry?*

A: My introduction to the construction and property industry comes from my father, who has worked both on-site and in executive roles for many years. From an early age, I was familiarised with the varied and tangible outcomes of his work, fostering a lasting interest in construction. This early exposure to the industry opened many potential career pathways for me, and continues to motivate me in my role as a Senior Project Engineer at Richard Crookes Constructions.

*Q: Beyond your professional role, you're committed to creating an inclusive industry. What inspired this dedication?*

A: My personal experience made me realise that many young women have a limited understanding of the construction industry and its many career pathways. Understanding that it's a relationship business founded on teamwork, I began looking for opportunities to engage with high school aged students, in the hopes of introducing them to the industry in a more personable and approachable way. When Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College engaged RCC to build their Scientia project, I worked with the College to create a Student Engagement Program to highlight the excitement and opportunities within the industry.

*Q: Can you share more about the Student Engagement Program and its impact?*

A: Certainly. The program, a collaboration between RCC and the College, offered students on-site experience, 'behind the scenes' site tours, and their own Junior PPE. As part of this, we arranged sessions with experts from different fields to introduce students to non-conventional construction pathways including Design, Safety, Quantity Surveying and Project Management. The aim was to highlight how rewarding the industry can be.

*Q: How did students respond to the program?*

A: Tom Lee, Director of Innovation and Technology at the College, highlighted the surprise students expressed at the access to the construction site and the people involved. It went beyond learning about a building being built; it opened their eyes to future career opportunities. The students were particularly eager to be involved as they were to be the beneficiaries of the building, and they looked forward to their future experiences within the building.



*Q: The program's ethos is "if you can see it, you can be it." Can you elaborate on this philosophy?*

A: Absolutely. The construction industry has traditionally been viewed in a very particular way. I believe we all have a responsibility to show young women that there's no 'one-size-fits-all' approach in property and construction. By making the industry visible and accessible, we can show young people that the industry is changing and contribute to a more equitable future.

*Q: What advice do you have for young women considering a career in construction?*

A: The construction industry offers a large range of highly rewarding roles, so go in with an open mind, knowing that every opportunity is available to you. The industry values experience so ask questions of those around you and don't be afraid to challenge stereotypes. Every day in the construction industry is full of challenge, conflict resolution and learning - you will never be bored!

Believing in "if you can see it, you can be it" inspired Isabella Spinolo to take action and reach out, creating collaborations. Through programs like the Student Engagement Program, Isabella actively contributes to a more inclusive and equitable future for the next generation.

*Cadie Doorley*

Richard Crookes Constructions

# NAVIGATING

## 'HAVING IT ALL'



I carried a significant burden from my immigrant parents to excel in Year 12 and University, especially as the first female in the family pursuing a degree. Despite their expectations, I was secretly uncertain and anxious about my career path. Opting for a double degree in Business (Banking and Finance) and IT, my strategy was to have a backup plan if one didn't pan out.

My passion for project management ignited during the final-year industry practice subject, leading me to the field I am in today.

With a deep love for the work, I explored many job opportunities. My first significant role was in the car manufacturing industry for Nissan Australia, focusing on the retail visual rollout for AU/NZ - this experience fuelled my ambition for more.

Joining Connex Melbourne Trains at 22, I was one of only two females in the Projects Division. Engaged in pioneering projects like the rail/road duplication at Middleborough Road and the first rail-over train station at Springvale, I found my calling in rail and transport, echoing my fathers advice from childhood.

Taking time off for motherhood, I balanced part-time work before returning full-time. In my current role as Director, Infrastructure at Slattery, I focus on building the company's infrastructure advisory portfolio in Victoria, and nationally, applying our expertise in cost management, estimation, project management, controls, commercial management and delivery. I also serve as Director of LAN Cost Consulting, an independent consultancy dedicated to specialised cost management and advisory services for the rail and transport infrastructure industry. Being part of the projects shaping the future, especially in roads and rail in Victoria fills me with pride. Contributing to the forward planning for my kids and future generations brings me happiness, knowing I made a meaningful difference.

I migrated to this country because of the civil war during the Pol Pot Regime in Cambodia - losing half my relatives to starvation, assault, gunfire and a kidnapping of my older sister. I was sponsored to Australia, and saw it as the beginning of a new chapter in the land of opportunities. Reflecting on my childhood in 1980's as an Asian immigrant - I recall it as a challenging experience and the beginning of my experience with bias and racism, with the pinnacle coming during eighth-grade - my English teacher assuming I belonged in ESL (English as a Second

Language). I challenged her assumptions, leaving me worried of the repercussions. This moment marked my realisation that racism and exclusion would persist. It became clear that my journey forward would require me to fiercely carve my own path and safeguard my identity.

In the early 2000's, I commenced my first proper job since graduation from university. It was an environment predominantly dominated by males, I found myself challenging stereotypical gender roles and repeatedly burdened with menial tasks and faced scepticism regarding my career aspirations. Assigned the roles of meeting minutes, ordering food, managing the dishwasher and ever assisting at the front reception - tasks far removed from my job description, I felt the weight of gender bias.

Becoming a mother at the age of 25 brought unforeseen challenges, especially in finding balance. The lack of maternity support and remote work options further compounded the complexity. Maintaining my career while caring for a newborn was tough. Despite taking nearly seven years off, I continued to work part-time as a consultant to ensure my presence in my field didn't wane during my absence. Keeping my professional networks informed and actively seeking opportunities helped me stay connected. Returning to work full-time, I embraced the pace of work, recognising my potential and devising a strategic plan to make up for lost time in my career.

I strongly believe that to instigate a fundamental change in the industry's mindset, the key lies in individuals adopting principled stands and displaying exemplary leadership. Currently there's a troubling tolerance for misconduct, along with a silent recognition that women speaking out must face harsher repercussions than the wrongdoers. I've personally faced such a situation recently, yet fear persists, and no one has spoken out against this breach of ethics. Increased focus and collective action are crucial; ignoring the issue is no longer acceptable.

CALL IT OUT, SPEAK UP!

*Director, Infrastructure - Slattery Australia.*



# RED DIRT, BLUE OCEANS, & GREY STEEL

## ONE WOMAN'S JOURNEY IN MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRIES

Red dirt, blue oceans, and grey steel. My career has taken me hundreds of metres underground, thousands of miles out to sea and on a train to the MCG (to see Taylor Swift, of course). Colourful and diverse and I was constructing something all the way.

My career has spanned three male dominated industries – mining, maritime and rail – which have each had their share of wins, challenges, and adventures. In this article, I share the lessons and learnings from my journey and consider what's next... which, despite my plans, could be anyone's guess!

### Chapter 1 - Red dirt

When I was 23, I packed my bags and caught a small propeller plane to a mine site located in the desert in the middle of Western Australia! It was scary and exciting, but it was an adventure, and I couldn't wait!

I spent almost four years working as a Project Manager on big and small iron ore projects at various mines sites throughout Western Australia. My swings were four weeks at work and one week at home which sometimes made the role very difficult given how much time I spent away from home. But it was extremely rewarding, and I learnt many valuable lessons, gained some interesting, and unusual experiences, and met some great (and not so great) people.

### *Not everyone has your best intentions at heart.*

I was 24 when I was the victim of relentless bullying from my manager on site. He ostracised me, intimidated me and emotionally beat down my confidence and spirit. Despite the glaring visibility of mistreatment, bystanders did nothing and said nothing. It made me feel I was at fault, I doubted myself, and thought there must be something wrong with me!

I couldn't do anything at the time. I was too frightened, I couldn't speak up and I went into my shell. He was the big boss, quite literally, and he often physically towered over me.

I think about this experience often and the profound impact it has had on me. The optimistic side of me can recognise that surviving this experience made me stronger, and more resilient. I am a staunch advocate myself, and I work hard to advocate for and support others too. I have an incredible support network who have taught me that if you are not getting the resolution you seek and deserve "get the hell out of there." But when I

reflect on this experience, I'm also forced to acknowledge that regardless of whether I should have spoken up, confronted him, known the organisations workplace bullying processes, it should never have happened. No one should ever be subjected to intimidation, harassment and bullying in the workplace.

### *Discovering lifelong bonds in unlikely places.*

In the midst of the isolated (physically and mentally) landscapes of Australia mine sites, I unearthed a surprising treasure: lifelong friendships. Despite some challenging times, there was a lot of fun filled times and lasting bonds created that are now etched into my memory.

I vividly recall what was at the time a seemingly insignificant event, reading my star sign predictions during my early weeks of arriving on site. It foretold a forthcoming friendship of great significance.

I already knew exactly who it was, Emma. When I shared this reading with her, she humorously brushed it off, suggesting I must be referring to someone else. "No Emma, it is talking about you!" From that moment onwards, Emma has been a pillar of



support and part of my cheer squad (and I part of hers) and we continue this from opposite sides of the country.

While navigating the challenges of isolation inherent in mine site work and operating within a male-dominated industry, it also served as a catalyst for the formation of many deep and lasting relationships. The isolation, paradoxically, nurtured a family like environment, united by the shared experience.

In the end, it was these unexpected friendships that became the true treasures of my mining experience, providing support and encouragement to each other. Highlighting the importance of human connection.

***You have to know when to walk away.***

Knowing when to prioritise your health over your job is a lesson I learned the hard way during my four-year stint working on mine sites. Despite experiencing a major health scare, I persisted, believing I could push through the challenges. However, there came a point when it all just became too much. It was time to hang up my steel cap boots and return to the city.

This experience taught me something that I still struggle to fully embrace: don't allow your job to consume your life. Your health should always be your top priority because once it deteriorates, your ability to work effectively diminishes as well.

Listening to your body, your heart, your mind and those trusted people around you is key. Sometimes, you just have to walk away. I am writing it now like it is easy, yet it has been somewhat of a challenge for me to implement. Even now after my experience, I continue to struggle with committing this lesson to memory.

In male-dominated industries like mining, the pressure to persevere despite health concerns can be particularly intense. However, it's essential to recognise the value of self-care and to understand that no job is worth jeopardising your health and overall well-being.

**Chapter 2 - Blue oceans**

After almost four years of FIFO (Fly in, Fly Out), and deciding to leave the mining industry I moved back to Perth full time. I met with a friend that I had worked with on one of the sites and she started telling me all about her new and exciting role working in the office supporting various ships and oil rig construction projects! It sounded super interesting to me, so here I started my career within the Oil and Gas and Maritime Industry.

***Boats are cool. Exploring the seas.***

No lesson here—just that boats are cool. Who knew?! The world of maritime was so intriguing and at times a lot of fun. From travelling to domestic ports to international trips to far flung ports.

While my role primarily kept me grounded in the office, I had the privilege of being involved in some unforgettable maritime





experiences. One stand out memory involves going on a sea ride on an anchor handling vessel in the north of Western Australia. I found myself on the ships deck alongside the crew, helping to secure containers to be lifted on to an oil rig by a massive crane! What an awesome experience to be able to support this project.

Another memorable experience was on board a Dive Support Vessel, which is where deep sea divers live when they are not spending their days on the bottom of the

ocean! Seeing where deep-sea divers live in such a confined space was extraordinary and for four weeks at a time! What a unique experience to have a glimpse of this lifestyle.

I know I said no lessons, but these experiences taught me about adaptability, teamwork, and how to stay calm in high-risk environments. And as I reflect on these adventures now, I'm filled with gratitude for the opportunity to experience the wonders of the sea first-hand.

#### *We had a crying room.*

Whilst working in the Oil and Gas and Maritime industry, and amidst all the cool new experiences we also had a crying room within the office. Yes – a crying room. A designated space for tears when you just couldn't take it anymore.

Tucked away in the corner of the office was a room furnished with nothing more than a box of tissues, a small desk, and a couple of chairs. It became a refuge for many of us.

In a male-dominated industry, compounded by the challenges of working with a unionised workforce, days could be extremely tough. There were moments when you would be on the receiving end of verbal abuse, profanity, and even threats.

Looking back, it is almost surreal to think we accepted this as normal. But perhaps it speaks volumes about the toll that such environments can take on individuals.

I often joke about the existence of the crying room now, but it is absurd upon reflection. While this little room provided many of us women a much-needed temporary escape from the office floor, its very existence prompts a troubling question: Why was such a space necessary in the first place? It is not until many years later that I realised how messed up it was.

#### *Suddenly, without warning – redundancy!*

Nearly two years working at a shipping company, only to have the ground shift beneath me. Returning to work after a lovely long weekend away in Melbourne, I found myself seated beside the company's HR/IR Manager (who was/is also a good friend of mine) who was tasked with delivering the unwelcome news.

Shock coursed through me. Disbelief clouded my thoughts as I tried to process the suddenness of it all. I had no idea it was coming. I felt terrible. Awful. Rejected. The questions flooded my mind – how would I manage? How would I pay my bills?

For days (what felt like months), uncertainty consumed me. Yet, amidst the chaos, a glimmer of opportunity emerged. I refused to succumb to despair. Instead, I started to think about what I could do now and what I wanted to do. Though the path ahead remained unclear, I embraced the new-found freedom. I decided to take some time to do a bit of travelling around Australia and ended spending a few months in Newcastle before returning to Perth to find my next role.

#### **Chapter 3 - Grey steel**

Another big life change, I was packing up my life in Perth and moving to Melbourne. Setting my sights on a new construction industry and that was rail!

#### *What good looks like and how you should feel about work on Sunday night.*

Achieving excellence and fostering an excellent team dynamic isn't just about meeting quotas or ticking boxes—it's about creating a space where every team member can thrive. Whilst working on a large rail infrastructure project in Victoria, I had the privilege to work alongside an exceptional group of individuals.



Our team consisted of Project Managers, Project Engineers, Commercial Managers, Procurement Managers, and Operations, Maintenance, and Engineering Interface Managers. Under the guidance of our Package Director, a leader committed to diversity and inclusivity, together the team made it not just a workplace, but a supportive community, where each member uplifted the other and had each other's back.

Our commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment wasn't just lip service; it was our daily mission. From the little things (which add up to big things!) to the substantial of initiatives, such as piloting a program aimed at attracting and retaining women in the rail industry. We all strived to ensure that every individual felt valued and respected. While our team set a high standard for workplace culture, it has now given me quite the challenge – post this team experience I have struggled to find a match. Our team stood as an example of progress—a testament to what good truly looks like!

But on those Sunday nights, as the work week is creeping towards you, there shouldn't be feelings of dread. It should be excitement and feelings of being proud of what you do and who you work with. When it comes to Monday morning, you should be stepping into an environment where everyone can collaborate, flourish, grow, and have their voices heard. That's what *good* looks like. That's how we should all feel about work on Sunday night.

***You don't need to be an Engineer to be a Project Manager.***

"You need to be an engineer to be a project manager." This sentiment reverberates throughout the Australian Infrastructure industry, and it is one that I've both heard, discussed with others who have experienced it and felt it myself, all too often. Despite being equipped with experience and education in project management, there are times when I can't shake the feeling that it's not enough.

Project management is about far more than technical experience. Yes, technical experience certainly helps, but it is not the sole requirement. Project Management at its core is a role driven by interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and the ability to guide diverse teams towards a common goal and ultimately your project objectives being met.

After all, the strength of a project lies not solely in technical know-how, but in the harmony of its people and processes. In an industry dominated by traditional norms and expectations, it's crucial to recognise and champion the importance of diverse skills and perspectives in driving project success. By doing so, we can pave the way for innovation, progress, and inclusivity.

***The journey to finding my voice.***

Finding my voice is a recent development in my career. It came from the safe space that a previous leader of mine, the incredible

Lisa, created. It was a space built on inclusivity, creativity, and genuine passion for people.

Working in male dominated industries, finding one's voice can feel non-existent. Yet it is a journey that many women, including myself, have to take and I found mine driven by the support of my line manager, Lisa and a desire to be heard and valued in spaces that our perspectives are quite often overlooked.

Finding my voice for me wasn't just about speaking up, it was also about being present, owning my skills and experience and challenging the thoughts of those around me. Sometimes that means the actions that I take, not necessarily the words that I say. It sometimes means speaking up in meetings or rooms where I am the only female, feeling extremely uncomfortable but doing it anyway.

Finding my voice is an ongoing journey for me, but it is one that I want to continue and encourage others to take. If we create safe spaces for others, we can all drive meaningful change.

**Chapter 4 - What's next ...**

So, what lies ahead in the next chapter of my journey? While I have a plan in place, there is always the possibility of change, of unexpected twists and turns that may alter your path – both in career and life.

Reflecting on my career so far, it has been an exciting mix of diverse experiences and adventures, each providing its own set of challenges and wins. I have approached each opportunity with an open mind and determination to make the most of it.

Amidst it all, I do still have many nagging thoughts of doubt, and feelings of lost confidence. There are unhelpful narratives that swirl around in my mind, which make me doubt my capabilities and aspirations.

But with all that, I know I have a strong desire to support others reach their potential, to uplift and empower those around me and in turn myself. When I think about when I have been most proud of my achievements it has been when I have been helping and serving others on their own journeys to success.

As I reflect on what is next, I know that I do not have all the answers, but I am committed to seeking out the possibilities that may await me. Whether it's charting new territories within these industries or exploring entirely different paths. I am fuelled by the knowledge that I carry with me the invaluable experiences and lessons learned from my time in these male-dominated industries.

Despite the highs and lows, the laughter, and tears, I have emerged stronger, more resilient, and ready to tackle whatever the future may hold.

*Ashlee Oakley*

# NAILING IT

## NARELLE WARREN'S SUCCESS STORY IN THE CONCRETE JUNGLE



Narelle Warren's story is one of grit, determination and resilience in the construction industry. As the co-founder and driving force behind Sydney based Brushwood Fencing Australia, her journey is marked by overcoming challenges and breaking barriers, with her gender being just one aspect of her remarkable tale.

"I always knew I wanted to forge my own path, to do things differently. I had a passion for the outdoors and realised that conventional office work wasn't my calling". Eventually, she pursued a Diploma in Landscape Design and founded her own landscaping enterprise before transitioning to her family owned fencing business.

"Right from the beginning, I was set on making a place for myself in an industry largely controlled by men. However, it wasn't smooth sailing, particularly in the early days. I encountered discrimination and obstacles that would have discouraged anyone."

Narelle recalls an incident where one architect sent her to do a quote, with the builder disregarding her presence onsite. "Back in the day, some men wouldn't engage with you, they wouldn't acknowledge you, and you felt like you didn't belong."

Undeterred, Narelle immersed herself, fencing through 60-80 hour weeks, and working shoulder to shoulder alongside her team - pushing boundaries and challenging stereotypes. "I believe in leading by example, and showing that gender should never be a barrier to success. It's about proving your worth through hard work and dedication. There's nothing I ask of my staff that I wouldn't do myself."

In fact, embodying this 'in-the-trenches' mindset hasn't been without sacrifices and personal repercussions on her health. Narelle revealed she's undergone multiple surgeries to address

the physical toll of her work. "You literally had to work twice as hard as anyone else onsite just to prove your worth. Things are getting much better, but we still have a long way to go."

Despite facing obstacles, Narelle credits her achievements to "damn hard work", a readiness to embrace risks, and an innovative mindset, including leveraging the power of technology to enhance productivity and communication with clients.

These factors have played a pivotal role in elevating the quality of projects executed by Brushwood Fencing, garnering widespread acclaim, winning multiple awards for its outstanding craftsmanship, customer service and significant impact on the industry. "One of my favourite projects would have to have been the commercial project for Taronga Zoo, Sydney. We completed the African Savannah Project, incorporating never before seen African inspired fencing. It was a big challenge, but also a lot of fun, very rewarding." Her team's innovative approach earned them a national commercial award, solidifying their reputation for excellence and creativity.

Undoubtedly, Narelle's efforts to advocate for change and improve the construction industry extend far beyond her own company, and they haven't gone unnoticed. In fact, her efforts to establish a 'National Apprenticeship Scheme' and petition the Federal Government as an advisory member on the Australian Fencing Skills Committee - have earned her accolades as a trailblazer. She made history by becoming the first woman to be inducted into the 'Hall of Fame' for her significant contributions to the industry.

"To be the first woman is such an achievement. It's exciting to be able to empower the next generation of both men and women in the industry."



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 **SCAN ME**





# NAWIC

## ACROSS THE GLOBE



Driven by a passion for equity and advancement for women, Sharon Hidalgo is making a tangible impact for women in construction.

Hidalgo joined Segal, a leading Human Resources consulting company three years ago with the goal of contributing to the development of the Architecture, Engineering and Construction vertical market. Today, as Vice President, New Client Acquisition for the Midwest Region, she collaborates with business leaders and owners to champion and enforce robust diversity, equity and inclusion policies that address gender disparities, foster equitable career opportunities and establish an inclusive culture where everyone feels valued and respected.

While Hidalgo entered the construction industry through a career in Human Resources, her family's roots in the industry go deep. Her father immigrated to the United States from Mexico to work for her uncle's construction company, which reinforced her sense of purpose and dedication to joining this field.

"Participation in NAWIC has deepened by understanding of the challenges women encounter in the construction industry. One of my most significant professional achievements is serving as the Chair of the National DEI Committee for NAWIC. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to work with a diverse group of talented women from various experiences and careers that share my passion for advocacy and advancement of women in the construction industry."

Hidalgo sees the construction industry becoming more welcoming to women, as well as a place where women can thrive in their careers, through positive changes such as:

- Equal opportunities for career growth and leadership roles.
- Ensuring that advancement opportunities are based on merit rather than gender.
- Increased representation of women at all levels from executives roles and owners of companies to entry-level roles.

- A more supportive work culture that includes flexible work arrangements. Strong mentorship and training programs.
- Industry wide collaboration to adopt zero tolerance policies for discrimination and harassment and ensure accountability.

She believes that the growing advocacy from industry leaders for the advancement of women adds a valuable layer of support, fostering successful and fulfilling careers within the construction field. One of the aspects Hidalgo loves most about her career is cultivating meaningful connections with individuals and guiding them through diverse professional challenges. She is passionate about offering mentorship and coaching, especially to empower the next generation of professional women in construction.

"Stepping into a new career can be intimidating, yet I wholeheartedly encourage every woman to seize the opportunity for professional growth and influence in the construction industry. The realm of possibilities is expansive, especially with the change to acquire new skills in cutting edge technologies such as drones, robotics and automation. These skills not only broaden horizons but also pave the way for exciting career prospects for women."

NAWIC is lead by passionate volunteers who all strive to champion and empower women in the construction and related industries to reach their full potential. We are part of a global NAWIC network with organisations in the United States, New Zealand, Canada, United Kingdom, South Africa, Qatar, Singapore and PNG. Let's discover and celebrate the collaborative spirit and global connections that drive the construction industry forward.

*Sharon Hidalgo*  
USA



Carrie Gardenhire is Director of Association Partnerships for Arcoro, a company that provides HR Software designed to meet the needs of the construction industry.

“My view of the construction industry was of one led by men on the job site but dependant on women to make sure everything ran smoothly behind the scenes”

“My grandfather and uncle were both general contractors, and my father was a construction attorney. I’ve watched the evolution of construction firms as they are passed (or ended) from generation to generation. Of course, that’s changing as more women join the trades and have professional careers that have them working in the field. But there are still many women keeping things running, and I love that my role allows those that are behind the scenes to shine as heroes within their construction organisation - the ones that manage and build efficiencies for the people processes and data.”

Gardenhire develops partnerships with the top construction associations, including NAWIC, to support the important work construction associations do for their members and to better connect Arcoro with its customers.

“Our software helps support the women in the field, but it also helps the many women in the office who are predominantly responsible for HR processes and functions. Using software to do their jobs frees them up from the manual tasks and allows them to be more strategic, which helps advance professional knowledge and careers. It also promotes work/life balance. When you’re not working 12-hour days to get through payroll

or onboarding, or some other manual process, you have more time to recharge and focus.”

As a member of the NAWIC Tulsa Chapter, Gardenhire has had the opportunity to meet women in all areas of the construction industry. “NAWIC has been amazing for growing my network within the construction communities across the country. I know I have learned so much about the industry through my interactions with my NAWIC sisters. I feel like I have a safety net of women professionals that I can turn to with questions and to bounce off ideas.”

In 2023, Arcoro was honoured with a TrustRadius Tech Cares Award for exceptional corporate responsibility and community impact for their work with NAWIC. “Even if we hadn’t been chosen for that award, our work with NAWIC is something I’m really proud of. Supporting an organisation that is so focused on making a positive impact on women and the construction industry is a professional privilege.”

“It should just be normal for women to be on jobsites as tradeswomen and project leaders, and in the office as company leaders and owners. It will be great over the coming years when more kids can say - my mom is a plumber, an electrician or a project supervisor. I think that’s really when the tipping point will happen, and we’ll see real movement into the industry from women excited for the opportunities construction can offer.”

*Carrie Gardenhire*

USA



### A Journey of Impact & Positive Change

As a recognised leader in the construction industry, Lisa Laronde continues to pave the way for transformative change across the sector. Lisa uses her voice and position to advocate for skilled trades, champion diversity, equity and inclusion, and reinforce the importance of women's representation in leadership roles.

Lisa is the President of RSG International, a global leader in road safety infrastructure, where she oversees strategy and operations while building psychologically safe work environments where diversity and inclusion are at the forefront. As a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) and Certified Management Accountant (CMA), Lisa has utilised her aptitude in finance and her skills in management and strategy to deliver strong performance, strategic growth, and increased market reach. In her role, Lisa oversees more than a dozen companies, including Powell Contracting, Peninsula Construction and B&K Enterprises.

While growth has been a pivotal part of Lisa's success at RSG International, she has also worked

diligently to create and foster a company culture that promotes employee wellness and collaboration, with an emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion. Lisa is known as a fierce advocate for women, and she is an influential speaker who volunteers on her time speaking at leadership and industry engagements. Lisa believes in giving back and lends her expertise to organisations to inspire others. Lisa's commitment to serving her community exemplifies her selflessness, empathy and genuine concern for others. Lisa coordinates RSG International's employee led charity committee and continually looks for ways for the company to make a difference in their communities.

Lisa is President of CAWIC (Canadian Association of Women in Construction), and was named one of Canada's 100 Most Powerful Women by the Women's Executive Network (WXN) in 2023. Lisa serves as an inspiration and catalyst for positive change. She blazes her own trail, and in doing so, is transforming the Canadian construction industry.

*Lisa Laronde*

CANADA



# BREAKING GROUND

## WOMEN FORGING THEIR CAREERS IN CONSTRUCTION



Despite their varied roles and career stages, Alesha Henare, Shereen Amin and Kamaile Knight share a common goal to succeed in the construction industry at Coates, Australia's largest equipment hire and solutions provider. Here, the women share their experiences, insights and strategies for navigating and succeeding in our traditionally male-dominated industry.

### **Alesha Henare** *3rd Year Mechanical Apprentice*

For Alesha Henare, challenging biases as a female apprentice comes down to studying hard, mastering her trade and consistently delivering her best. "Ultimately, all that matters is how I do my job. My focus remains on my work ethic, mechanical knowledge and getting my qualification," she says.

After completing Year 10, Alesha worked as a truck driver and in an abattoir, before embarking on a four-year apprenticeship as a 25-year-old mature student at Coates. Once she completes a Certificate III in Mobile Plant Mechanics, Alesha will qualify as a fitter-mechanic.

Her responsibilities include conducting fleet and regulatory inspections, and performing repairs under the guidance of

a fitter-mechanic. "I'm exposed to such a diverse range of equipment at Coates, from a vacuum cleaner to a 30-tonne excavator. It's challenging, but there are decades of experience on the workshop floor for me to lean on," says Alesha.

Coates employs a number of female apprentices across the country who are training to be electricians and fitter-mechanics, although Alesha is the sole woman in the workshop in Dandenong, Victoria.

"My view of males has definitely evolved throughout my apprenticeship," she says. "On my first day, I was shaking in my boots because I'd worked in other male-dominated industries that weren't so accepting of women. But I have an amazing support network in my mentors and coworkers, especially my immediate boss Manny Malliaros."

Knowing when and how to ask for help has been challenging, she admits. "I never wanted to be seen as a clueless girl who can't do what my male coworkers can in the workshop," Alesha says. "Over the past three years, I've grown comfortable with the fact that I'm biologically smaller and sometimes physically need help."

For women thinking of joining the industry or doing an apprenticeship, Alesha's advice is to come with an open mind and the right attitude. "Male or female, you only need three qualities to be a successful apprentice – passion for what you're doing, willingness and initiative to learn, and the ability to adapt," she says.

### **Kamaile Knight** *General Manager – Industrial Solutions*

Kamaile Knight's career journey is a testament to the power of seizing opportunities and embracing the unknown. Previously a chartered accountant, Kamaile worked at Stockford and Sparke Helmore Lawyers in Newcastle, NSW, before seeking a more customer-focused, commercial role in the Hunter Valley's booming coal industry.

"I didn't love accounting, but I really enjoyed understanding how businesses serve customers, how they create revenue, and what





value they add," says Kamaile. "So I jumped into an industry I had no idea about and have loved it ever since."

With 12 years of management experience at ARTC and Pacific National Australia, Kamaile joined Coates in 2023 as General Manager - Industrial Solutions. Leading a team of 70 across the country, she oversees the provision of hire equipment, tool stores, asset management technology and expertise for construction, plant maintenance and shutdown projects.

While women hold 22 per cent of leadership positions at Coates, with a target of reaching 25 per cent by 2025, Kamaile is the only female General Manager in an operational role, underscoring both the progress made and the journey ahead.

"Navigating a male-dominated industry as a woman can be both challenging and very rewarding," she says. "For me, it's about being open to learning, seeking out experts in their fields and building strong networks to continually grow in every role."

Kamaile has witnessed progress in diversity but believes there is still much more to be done.

"I would like to say women are well-represented, but it's still a no. We need senior leaders and managers to really understand how important it is for women to be better represented in all roles, whether trade, operational, management or professional," she says. "The options for women in construction are endless – we need to make entry points more appealing and accessible."

**Shereen Amin**  
*Senior Engineer – Structures*

Lifelong learning has been pivotal to Shereen Amin's success throughout her 17-year engineering career. "To continue my professional development, I attend training courses provided by Engineers Australia and Coates provides training for new equipment and design tools," she says. This commitment has paid off, with Shereen recently achieving the Chartered Professional Engineer designation.

With more than ten years' experience as an engineer in Egypt, Shereen moved to Australia in 2015 and spent four years designing commercial and residential buildings for Australian Consulting Engineers (ACE). After taking 18 months maternity leave with her son, she joined Coates in 2021.

As part of the Engineering Solutions team, Shereen designs temporary propping and shoring structures that provide crucial support and stability during the construction process and allow the permanent structures to be built.

"As a consultant at ACE, I'd engaged Coates before to design internal hydraulic shoring systems when we couldn't anchor under neighbouring properties. But I'd never designed the hydraulic shoring solution myself," she says. "The most rewarding



part of my job is seeing my design become reality on site and serve its intended purpose safely."

According to Engineers Australia, women make up just 14 per cent of the Australian engineering workforce, similar to the proportion of women in the construction industry. Things are slowly changing though, says Shereen. "Earlier in my career, it was not unusual for me to be the only woman in a room, but at Coates I work with a number of talented female engineers," she says.

"It is always challenging for women to be part of a male-dominated field and succeed," Sheeren continues. "But with hard work, a keenness to learn and a supportive team, I believe this challenge disappears over time. I encourage other female engineers to not let anything stop you, be brave and give it a go because the outcomes will really be worth your time and effort."

To learn more about Coates, visit [coates.com.au](https://www.coates.com.au)

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