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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2	WORK HARD, DREAM BIG - THEY'RE THE NEXT GENERATION by Eliza Lane, Australian Industry Trade College	56
ABOUT NAWIC	2	THE ABILITY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT TO CONQUER ADVERSITY - MY KOKODA EXPERIENCE by Emma Foster, SHAPE Australia	58
THE NAWIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS	4	DISCOVERING THE POWER OF FEMALE COMMUNITY by Sher Mitchell, Advance Archaeology	60
NAWIC NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD Kristine Scheul	6	BUILDING A CONSTRUCTION COMPANY THAT IS MINE An interview with Ashleigh Hiemstra, Merge Building	62
MINISTER'S FOREWORD Senator the Hon Marise Payne	8	MY 2020 = MATERNITY LEAVE + COVID-19 + REDUNDANCY + STARTING A NEW BUSINESS by Carly Zanini, Carly Zanini Consulting	64
THE 2021 NAWIC INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY SCHOLARSHIP	10	WEST GATE WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE by Elizabeth De Castro Diaz & Patricia Tahitahi, CPB Contractors for CPBJH JV	68
CALLING FOR CHANGE: THE VOICES LEADING AUSTRALIA'S GREEN TRANSITION A summary of the 2020 NAWIC IWD Scholarship Research Report	12	WE CARE & CONNECT	70
ENGAGEMENT WITH REGIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH THE VCS TOUR A summary of the 2019 NAWIC IWD Scholarship Research Report	15	MENTORING IS KEY TO A STRONG CAREER PATHWAY by Elissa Stirling, Inhabit	71
THE NAWIC BRIGHT IDEAS GRANT	17	IF I CAN DO IT, ANYONE CAN by Jo Matai, Lendlease	75
WE ARE TWENTY FIVE	19	THE POWER OF SUPPORT GROUPS IN ENABLING TRADESWOMEN TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL An interview with Sarah Brunton, ERGT Australia	76
HOW NAWIC BECAME A FORCE FOR CHANGE IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY An interview with Professor Paula Gerber, Monash University	20	EMPOWERING WOMEN TO STAND TALL by Anna Broughton, NS Group	78
I NEVER DREAMT NAWIC WOULD BECOME SUCH AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY LIFE by Sandra Steele, K&L Gates	22	MY CONSTRUCTION HEROES by Kara Chisholm, Transport for NSW	80
IN SAFE HANDS - LUISA YOUNG SHARES HER EXPERIENCES OF TWO DECADES IN CONSTRUCTION by Narae Ko, Unispace	24	DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH CULTURAL LEADERSHIP by Carolyn Whyte, Carolyn Whyte Research & Writing	81
CH-CH-CHANGES - A 30 YEAR LOOK BACK AT THE INDUSTRY by Becky Paroz, Queen B Project System	27	A CAREER THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE	84
EQUALITY IS EQUALITY An interview with Yvonne Pengilly, QBCC	28	WE ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE	85
THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME by Alison Mirams, Roberts Co	30	WORKING WITH THE AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC PROGRAM by Maree Riley, Australian Antarctic Division	86
AN INDUSTRY OPENING ITS ARMS TO WOMEN An interview with Allison Smith and Fiona Tellefson, APP Corporation	34	WHENEVER YOU THINK NO ONE IS THERE FOR YOU, LAUNDRY WILL BE THERE FOR YOU by Lina Mclvor, Multiplex	91
THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW by Elia Basso, Basso Project Management	37	MULTIPLEX - REDEFINING PARENTAL LEAVE by Markelle Farley, Multiplex	92
WE CELEBRATE WOMEN	38	HOW THE ACA CORRECTED THE GENDER IMBALANCE IN THE BOARDROOM TO DRIVE POSITIVE CHANGE ACROSS THE INDUSTRY by Meg Redwin, Multiplex	94
RADMILA DESIC APPOINTED A MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA	39	INCREASED FLEXIBILITY THANKS TO THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC by Charlotte Nichols & Kate Hannaford, John Holland Group	97
CIT - CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES TO EMPOWER FEMALE TRADIES	41	REBUILDING THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY'S CULTURE FROM THE GROUND UP by Dr Christina Scott-Young, RMIT University	98
CAPITAL VENEERING - PROMOTING HAPPINESS, PROGRESSION AND GOAL ACHIEVEMENT by Taylor Perrin, Capital Veneering	44	THE NAWIC QUEENSLAND WOT 11% STRATEGY by Radmila Desic AM, Queensland Government Customer & Digital Group	100
THE SEVEN THINGS I WISH I KNEW WHEN RETURNING TO WORK FROM PARENTAL LEAVE by Rachael de Zylva, Laing O'Rourke	46	GENDER DIVERSITY WITHIN CONSTRUCTION, ENGINEERING & PROPERTY by Emily Harris, Design & Build Recruitment	103
CHANCE CREATES ADVENTUROUS CAREER DETOUR by Helen Shield, Construction Training Fund	48	2020 NAWIC AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE	105
DESIGN MANAGER CASSANDRA ZUGHBI REFLECTS ON HER EVOLVING CAREER by Clare Bailey, Taylor	50		
WE ARE BOLD & BRAVE	53		
PASSING ON THE CONFIDENCE BATON by Melonie Bayl-Smith, Bijl Architecture	54		



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A NAWIC SA Chapter networking event

ABOUT NAWIC

The National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) is an Australian, not-for-profit organisation formed in 1995.

NAWIC is led by a team of passionate volunteers who 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 of NAWIC organisations, including those in the United States, New Zealand, Canada, Singapore and Qatar.

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 make a contribution to other women in the construction industry.

OUR VISION

An equitable construction industry where women fully participate.

OUR MISSION

To achieve 25% minimum female participation across all of the construction industry by 2025 - 25BY25.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Advocacy and lobbying for change. With our combined experience, our advocacy team will be leading change across government and industry. We will be the 'go to' voice for comment around women in construction.

Education for individuals, companies and industry as a whole. We focus on education at all levels,

supporting robust initiatives designed to foster success, create future leaders and role models and empower our industry associates to make informed decisions.

Connection, celebration and support for all women in construction through our membership community. The

presence of energetic and vocal NAWIC Chapters in every state and territory delivers networking opportunities, individual support, recognition and a lifelong community for women on a personal level that is safe, supportive and welcoming right throughout Australia. **■**



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THE NAWIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS



KRISTINE SCHEUL
National Chairperson

Kristine joined NAWIC in 2007 and became Chair of the ACT members of the NSW/ACT Chapter as it then was. After a few years she helped found the ACT Chapter of NAWIC and served as President of the ACT Chapter for over

two years. She has a long history and background in construction having been the Construction Partner at Meyer Vandenberg Lawyers for several years before moving to Brisbane and joining Thiess. During her time in Brisbane, Kristine was the Project Lawyer on both the Airport Link project and the Victorian Desalination project. Kristine moved back to Canberra and worked as the Project Lawyer on the Light Rail project and is now working within the Infrastructure Delivery Directorate within the ACT Government. Kristine is very passionate about the role of women in the construction industry and has both mentored and been mentored by some of the most talented and innovative women in the industry.

CHRISTINA YIAKKOUPIS
National Vice Chairperson

Christina joined NAWIC in 2011 as part of the QLD Chapter and became the Awards Chair for four years and then as Co-Vice President before being elected to the National Board in 2017.



Christina has worked in construction for over 10 years having entered the industry as a Graduate Civil Engineer at Lendlease where she quickly realised that the structure aspect of construction was what interested her. She is currently working for a concrete supply, pump and place contractor, Pro Concrete Group based on the Gold Coast. Christina is passionate about young girls knowing that construction is an industry they should consider for a career and making their pathway more accessible. She also loves to celebrate the amazing achievements and hearing the stories of the women and the men that support them in this challenging industry.



MIRIAM D'SOUZA
Director & National Treasurer

Miriam is a Projects and Infrastructure Partner at Norton Rose Fulbright, based in Perth. With more than 17 years' experience in the construction industry Miriam's focus is on the mining, social infrastructure, waste

and water sectors. Miriam loves working on WA-based projects and has advised on the development of Fiona Stanley Hospital and Perth Children's Hospital, development of Elizabeth Quay and the redevelopment of the Perth Museum. Miriam also advised on the Kwinana and East Rockingham Waste to Energy projects (the first of their kind in Australia) as well as numerous iron ore projects in the Pilbara for BHP, including the recent South Flank project. Miriam has been actively involved with the WA Chapter of NAWIC since its inception in 2009 and a member of the National Board since 2017. She has thoroughly enjoyed contributing to the growth of the WA Chapter and is now focussing on strategic issues for NAWIC as a Board member.



FIONA DOHERTY
Director

Fiona has been involved with NAWIC's ACT Chapter since 2008. She was the Chapter's Treasurer from 2008 to 2011 and was a Board Director representing ACT in 2011. Fiona also held the

Chapter Treasurer role from 2015 and was pivotal in the Chapter's growth from both a sponsorship and member benefit perspective. Fiona brings extensive operational experience gained as a Board member for various not-for-profit organisations. As a NAWIC Board member, Fiona is passionate about engaging with members, demonstrating NAWIC's relevance to the construction industry and most importantly, lobbying government and corporations for change.



JOANNE FARRELL
Director

Jo has been in the construction industry for 24 years, starting as an Apprentice Carpenter, and is now the General Manager of Kane Constructions ACT. She has worked across the eastern seaboard on airport

runways, schools, hospitals and defence projects and notably spent three years in Lithuania working on a Nuclear Decommissioning Facility and learning Russian. She is vocal and passionate about seeing more tradeswomen in the industry. In her Director role for NAWIC, she will oversee the national education portfolio and will work with government bodies and industry to implement pathway programs for apprenticeships and university placements. Jo understands that to create the tangible change the industry needs, we must collaborate and embrace partnerships at every level to ensure all women are given the support they need to thrive in the industry.



SAMANTHA WOODWARD
Director

Samantha is the Founder and Managing Director of THINK SAVVY - an organisation that provides services and high-tech solutions in the governance, risk, safety and compliance spaces.

THINK SAVVY collaborates with medium and large enterprises nationally and internationally. Samantha has twenty plus years of experience in non-traditional working environments, including the mining and resources sector and the construction industry. As a woman in STEM, Samantha also has a passion for software technology and effectively bridges the divide between operational priorities and technology solutions, through demystifying technology. Prior to joining the NAWIC Board, Samantha held various roles in the NAWIC VIC Chapter including President and Sponsorship Chair. In her Director role, Samantha is an active voice for increased engagement of women and girls in the construction industry. She aligns herself with the priorities of celebrating women and encouraging them to be bold and brave while also advocating for industry change.



KYLIE JUDD
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. She has worked nationally in Perth and Melbourne, as well as internationally, having spent five years in Dubai, UAE. Currently, Kylie is working as an Assistant Project Manager working for Multiplex, and is based in Perth. 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.



HAYLEY GILMOUR
Director

Hayley is a Quantity Surveyor by background and has over 19 years' experience in the UK and Australian construction industries across a variety of projects in both the building and infrastructure

sectors. In her role as a Commercial Leader at Laing O'Rourke, Hayley oversees the commercial and contract management of various projects across Australia. Hayley held the role of Co-Chair for the NAWIC NSW Mentoring Sub-Committee for three years and was awarded the 2014 NAWIC NT Crystal Vision Award. [n](#)




We often talk about the need to celebrate the women and men who are championing the call for more equal representation of women in our industry. We have seen and heard women's incredible achievements through our awards, mentoring programs, Success Series' and scholarships. Yet despite this great news, the most recent WGEA report card showed women's participation has slipped and the industry is still lagging in pay equity. This is why, on our 25th Anniversary, NAWIC's core policy is to achieve 25% minimum female participation across all of the construction industry by 2025.

It has been a pleasure working with the Board this year to produce our boldest strategic plan yet. As NAWIC has matured and expanded over the last 25 years, we must look to the future of our organisation and why it exists. We know many of our members and stakeholders want to address and rectify the decreasing rate of women's participation. By focusing on strategies centred on advocacy, education and our community and connections, we hope to resolve some of the issues preventing women from entering and staying in the industry. These include pay inequality, feeling safe and being respected in the workplace as well as having the ability to advance careers while maintaining flexibility to manage roles outside the workplace. If we all work together on ensuring these issues are solved, we will see more young women and girls choose construction as a career.

It has been wonderful to see so many organisations take up the mantle that NAWIC has championed over the past 25 years. Advocating for more Government initiatives such as the grants provided to the MBA to create Women Building Australia; the NSW Government Scheme covering the cost of training women in apprenticeships; the ACT Government partnership with NAWIC ACT to promote pathways into construction as well as the ongoing funding from CSQ for the work being undertaken by NAWIC QLD's Women on Tools are all fundamental to achieving our goal.

As a not-for-profit organisation, NAWIC is thrilled to be partnering with other organisations, at commonwealth and state levels, to apply for additional grants to launch some of the most innovative and generous programs to ensure the number of women entering our industry increases. As we increase this pipeline, we acknowledge we can't lose focus on making sure those women then stay.

I hope that you will use this Journal to feel inspired by women and men in our industry; to see what is possible and to connect with those you haven't met yet but with whom may have a profound impact on your career by virtue of being seen. Stories are important. Role models are important.

NAWIC looks forward to continuously showcasing and highlighting the diverse and rewarding range of careers and opportunities available in the Australian construction industry and ensuring that whatever those careers are, women are able to be fully supported to participate equally. 

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

by Kristine Scheul
National Chairperson

Since I wrote the foreword for our inaugural self-published Journal in 2019, it feels a little trite to say 'much has happened'. Due to the pandemic, we effectively lost a year between then and now. Whilst the construction industry has received much attention from the Government through budget announcements and stimulus packages, it has also had to contend with the impacts of lockdowns, skills shortages and supply chain issues. Nevertheless, I keep returning to the same theme and that is the incredible resilience of NAWIC, our members and our volunteers who have managed to keep everyone connected, not only across their own states and territories but across borders too.

The NAWIC Journal 25th Anniversary Edition reflects the endearing friendships and working relationships formed through our association and across states and territories. It is full of individuals, organisations and academics who have invested in women. We have learned through research, forums and discussions that in order to attract young women and girls into the industry, and to position construction as a viable career path, we need to share individual journeys and common experiences. After 25 years, it's wonderful to see most of the stories are about the progress that has been made. Of course, some remind us of the road yet to be paved.



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MINISTER'S FOREWORD

by Senator the Hon Marise Payne

Minister for Foreign Affairs
and Minister for Women




I am delighted to support the 25th Anniversary Edition of the NAWIC Journal. Now more than ever we need to encourage and support women to pursue employment and careers in traditionally male-dominated sectors like construction.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in workforce and skills shortages in Australia, including in the construction industry. Australia's recovery from the pandemic will require a stronger, more resilient and income-generating economy which is inclusive of all Australians. As part of the JobMaker Plan, the Government is providing targeted support to increasing women's workforce participation, and women are indicating that they are willing and available to work more.

I commend NAWIC on its mission to achieve 25 per cent female participation across the construction industry by 2025. The industry has made good progress to attract women by offering more flexible working arrangements and appointing more women into leadership positions. However, the industry remains male-dominated with women making up only 13.8 per cent of the workforce. The gender pay gap for the industry was 16.4 per cent in 2020, higher than the national average of 13.4 per cent. More work needs to be done and the Government is committed to complementing the efforts of the construction industry to attract more women into pursuing employment and careers in the sector.

Since 2016-17, the Government has invested over \$2.5 million towards supporting women in the building and construction industry, through a key partnership with Master Builders Australia. In February of this year, I launched an expansion of the Women Building Australia program with an additional \$1.6 million investment under the Government's 2020 Women's Economic Security Statement. The expansion will build on the program's success to date by supporting more women to pursue a career in building and construction and providing mentoring to develop women into management and leadership roles. The expanded program also includes a new support service for women experiencing discrimination or harassment.

In May 2021, I also announced 60 organisations to receive government grant funding under the Women's Leadership and Development Program. The grants will support almost 40,000 women by increasing choices in work and breaking down employment barriers. Among the projects is The Skill Engineer's Girls of Steel project which will support women to enter into an apprenticeship in a non-traditional trade.

The progress that has been achieved is an excellent collaborative effort by industry associations such as NAWIC, business, government and individuals. I commend the women in this journal for sharing their stories and congratulate NAWIC for its achievements over the last 25 years. I look forward to seeing more women working in the construction industry including in management and leadership positions. 



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THE 2021 NAWIC INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY SCHOLARSHIP

The NAWIC International Women's Day (IWD) Scholarship has been awarded annually since 2009. Supported by our generous, long-term sponsors CULT and MPA Projects, the research scholarship is the most significant award of its kind for female professionals working in the construction industry.

The IWD Scholarship provides \$20,000 in funding for a female NAWIC member to carry out a project or research to challenge or change current industry thinking. This year's scholarship was increased to include all aspects of the construction process, from improvements in construction methodology to the exploration of policy issues, such as the participation of women in the construction industry.

Kristine Scheul, NAWIC's National Chairperson, explained why the 2021 scholarship was approached a little differently. "We extended the reach of the scholarship to include the full range of diversity of our membership and to ensure it remains a vehicle for individual development as well as one for improvement of the construction industry as a whole."

The theme of IWD this year was #ChooseToChallenge. NAWIC embraced this theme as part of the judging process. As Kristine further explained, "Collectively we can challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden perceptions, celebrate women's achievements and improve the situation for women in the industry. A challenged world is an alert world. From challenge comes change, so let's all choose to challenge."

EMMA GEORGIU - THE 2021 IWD SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

This year the NAWIC IWD Scholarship was awarded to Emma Georgiou, Senior Specialist, Programs at Acciona. Emma's proposal titled Challenging norms in recruitment for construction: Redefining the talent pool to increase women's representation at all



levels, was chosen for its potential to be meaningful to a range of participants in the industry from small businesses through to Tier 1 construction companies.

Upon the announcement at the NAWIC NSW IWD Breakfast held at the CULT Design Showroom on 11 March 2021, Emma said she was honoured to be the recipient of the scholarship. "I am so excited to embark upon this research with NAWIC and can't wait to share the journey of this work with our industry as it unfolds over the course of the year. From challenge comes change, and it is my hope that this research will challenge the construction industry to reframe its view of talent and in doing so, both ensure women's fullest participation in the industry and take a leading position in the recovery of the Australian economy and the long-term advancement of women in this country." ■

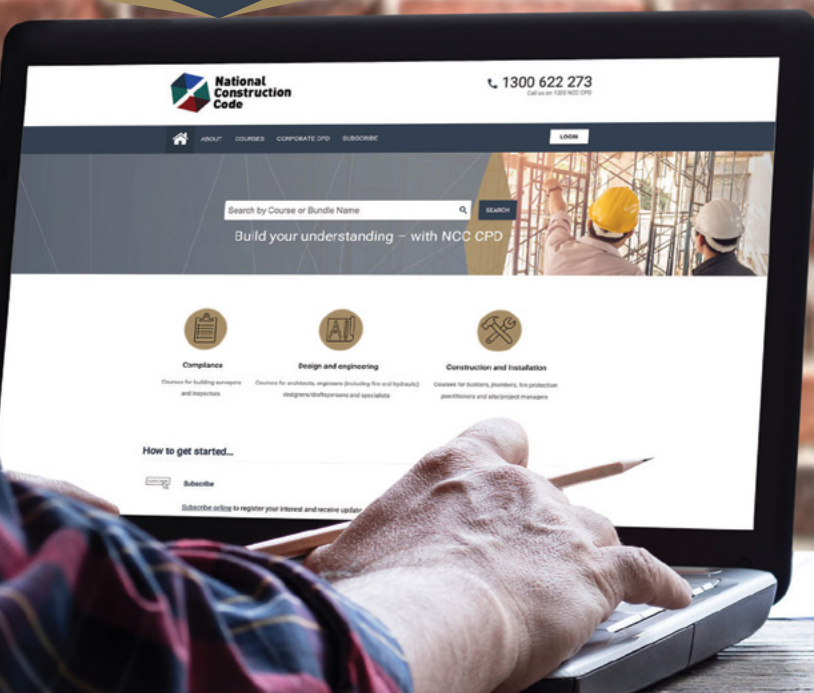
Emma Georgiou's IWD Scholarship Research Report will be available in March, 2022.

To find out more about the NAWIC IWD Scholarship visit nawic.com.au



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CALLING FOR CHANGE: THE VOICES LEADING AUSTRALIA'S GREEN TRANSITION

- a summary of the 2020 NAWIC IWD Scholarship Research Report



by Sarah Lawlor

Senior Architect, fjmt studio
& 2020 NAWIC IWD Scholarship Winner

Momentum is building. In the midst of a global pandemic, people across the world are demanding action on a range of issues, demonstrated by climate strikes, Women's March for Justice and Black Lives Matter. Each of these social movements advocate for equity and widespread mobilization and demonstrate a challenge to the system in which these interlinked crises are evident.

It was in this context I commenced my NAWIC International Women's Day (IWD) Scholarship research, exploring diversity and representation in environmental leadership in the built environment industry. My project drew together the imperative for the construction industry to act on climate change and the diversity necessary to ensure innovative and representative leadership in this space. In the same way that the business case for gender representation in leadership has been proven over the last few decades to improve business profitability, my research was based on a broader premise that diversity in sustainability leadership must surely similarly help organisations improve other business goals beyond just profit, including sustainability goals.

My project built on an increasing body of research globally around women and sustainability, such as the UN Environment Programme, which identified 'women in environmental decision-making at all levels' to be one of four priority areas, arguing that diverse representation in decision-making is vital to sound policy and action. As part of my research, I recorded interviews with a number of sustainability leaders in the built environment, including Architects Declare spokesperson Caroline Pidcock, who echoed the UN Environment Programme goal when she talked about "building a coalition of voices." Caroline spoke about the danger of an elite group setting the targets, where a small number of voices dictate, that perhaps aren't representative of the broader majority of us who want a better future.

The construction industry is responsible for a significant portion of Australia's carbon emissions. It also continues to be male-dominated and my IWD research looked at whether this trend extends to the sustainability roles within it. What my research uncovered is a diverse sustainability sector, in which women participate at higher levels than in other areas of the built environment. I found that gender representation in sustainability was fairly balanced, with significant representation of women in leadership positions role-modelling and encouraging increased participation of women in the industry.

There are a number of factors contributing to strong participation in sustainability by women. Evident in the sector is an interconnectedness between environmental and social aims, with diversity seen as fundamental to sustainability. The sustainability field demonstrates practices that support diversity, including flexibility, mentoring and a commitment to social equity. It is also a broad, multidisciplinary field, allowing for various avenues to enter the industry and a breadth of the talent pipeline. As a relatively new field with a culture distinct from the male-dominated construction or engineering sectors, sustainability seems unburdened by the inequalities of gender stereotypes and rigid hierarchical structures that have been historically evident in other areas of the built environment.

However, sustainability has its own challenges in interacting with the established structures of the construction industry, where problematic and often gendered perceptions of the sustainability field are evident, such as in its perception as a 'soft' field, with connotations of nurturing or 'greenie' types. Each of these perceptions is concerning, as they undermine and devalue the sustainability field, reducing the efficacy of sustainability outcomes in the built environment. A number of participants in my research referred to sustainability being seen as

feminine, or non-masculine, and referenced cultural issues that may impede men from wanting to pursue an interest or career in sustainability, because it's considered 'unmanly.'

I interviewed Laura Hamilton-O'Hara, CEO of the Living Future Institute, who spoke about the danger of having one gender overrepresented in any field and the inherently problematic nature of being seen as a gendered field. She said, "we know that historically female fields, like nursing and teaching get paid less and are undervalued." There is a risk that a gendered perception of the sustainability field, which needs to operate within male-dominated sectors, could lead to it being similarly undervalued or not taken seriously.

Because of this, there were people I spoke to that objected to a focus on women in the sustainability industry, at the risk of alienating men. It's a difficult line for a study like this to work, because there is a desire to celebrate women's strong involvement and contribution to such an important industry, but a risk that a perception of strong female involvement could negatively impact how sustainability is valued in the construction industry, which is of course, a fundamental problem.

So, what happens when women, operating within the predominantly male space of construction, are seen as the champions of environmental sustainability - an issue that has been slow to develop any kind of legitimacy in Australia? Karla-Fox Reynolds from Climate KIC in WA, spoke about sustainability

"My research was based on a broader premise that diversity in sustainability leadership must surely similarly help organisations improve other business goals beyond just profit, including sustainability goals."

consultants never being the most respected person in the room and when they are also the only woman in the room, it can compound the difficulty in getting any level of respect, and to have their voice heard.

Undertaking this research in 2020, during the context of COVID, there seems to have been an emergence of thinking about a different kind of leadership required to deal with the challenges of the current world. A common thread in many of the conversations I had around leadership was that sustainability leaders are breaking the mould of what leadership looks like. Sustainability leaders are purposeful, strategic and empathetic, qualities that could equally be described simply as 'good leadership,' but haven't always been so valued. In a world where momentum for change is building, it feels like expectations around leadership are starting to shift, which was acknowledged by the Sustainability Group leader at Northrop, Ian van Eerden, when he said: "If we measure all of our leaders on their ability to do things that old white men are really good at doing, then we're going to have a whole heap of old white men. So, we need to change the benchmarks to which we judge leadership."

In my mind, the diversity of the sustainability industry should be an example for the broader built environment, and the perception issues it faces are entirely external to the field. I believe these perceptions highlight that efforts to improve gender equity and diversity in fields such as construction and engineering continue to be urgent and necessary. Equity demands mutual respect and pervasive cultural change is required in the broader built environment industry to break down negative perceptions of the sustainability field and improve the integration and uptake of sustainability.

So, to answer the title question of my IWD Scholarship research, 'is sustainability leadership in the built environment 'women's business?'' The answer is, of course not, it's everyone's business. In the context of the climate crisis, we need to collectively take action, in the most effective ways possible, ensuring all voices are heard. **n**

To download a copy of Sarah Lawlor's report, *Is Sustainability Leadership in the Built Environment 'Women's Business?'* A Study of Diversity in Sustainability Leadership in the Built Environment, visit nawic.com.au

Sarah also hosts the podcast, *Design Conscious*, where she interviews sustainability leaders, recorded as part of her IWD Scholarship research.



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ENGAGEMENT WITH REGIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH THE VIRTUAL CONSTRUCTION SITE TOUR - AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

- a summary of the 2019 NAWIC IWD Scholarship Research Report



by Dr Fiona Lamari

Senior Lecturer in Construction Management, Faculty of Engineering, QUT & 2020 NAWIC IWD Scholarship Winner and NAWIC Chapter Co-Vice President (QLD)



Travelling back 20 odd years ago, I told my Dad I wanted to study construction at university. Dad was taken aback. No one in my family worked in the construction-related industry. My Dad said, "Daughter, construction is not a place for girls. Climbing up and down [the scaffold]." He shook his head, in awe of my choice of further study.

Dad did not stop me from putting down a construction course as my first preference, but he did insist that I put down more conventional options such as business administration and accounting as my second and third preferences. I received an offer to study a construction course in Hong Kong. The rest is now history.

Fast-track 20 years, through my years working in the education sector, I get questions from students, parents and teachers - I have a student interested in a placement in construction. Is it safe? What is it like to work on site? "What is better than to show them what actually happens on a construction site?" I thought. This was the birth of the Virtual Construction Site (VCS) tour.

The overarching project aim is to demystify the construction industry by promoting the exciting, diverse career options for high school students through an immersive virtual experience, the VCS tour, to take a peek at what goes on behind the gates on a construction site. The VCS tour offers an authentic experience similar to a physical construction site visit.

The VCS tour takes students on a trip in a personnel hoist to the top of the jump form and finishes at the display suite. During the VCS tour, students meet with

a diverse range of professions on the project and hear their career journeys in the construction industry. This project also evaluated whether the VCS tour experience has an impact on students' perception of the construction industry and students' consideration of a construction career.

The VCS tour was offered to high schools through NAWIC Queensland's In-School Experience Program. 76 students (16 male and 60 female) from three high schools from three different regions in Queensland participated in this research project from August to November 2019.

KEY FINDINGS

- 99% of participating students enjoyed the VCS tour experience.
- The VCS tour experience has a positive impact on changing students' perceptions of construction being a male-dominated career with a net 34% improvement overall. Particularly, these findings revealed a net favourable movement of 40% in regional students.
- Four in five students believe they have an increased understanding of people's roles in construction after the VCS tour experience.
- The VCS tour experience increases students' level of interest in construction
- The VCS tour experience can trigger students' consideration for a career in construction, an 11% increase in regional students.
- School teachers could see huge potential in class teaching using immersive engagement such as the VCS tour.



The VCS tour takes students on a trip in a personnel hoist to the top of the jump form and finishes at the display suite. During the VCS tour, students meet with a diverse range of professions on the project and hear their career journeys in the construction industry.



- Opportunities to collaborate with schools to clarify career plans in construction - see the working environment and hear what people do in construction.
- The VCS tour makes the site visit cost-effective, safe and accessible. Students can explore the construction site in a safe environment, more so for students from regional locations whom would otherwise be unable to attend the site visit due to cost and distance.
- Immersive technology, such as virtual 360 video, can offer a powerful and insightful experience to students on 'a day in my life' which can demystify the working environment of the construction site and increase their awareness of the industry.
- Industry and universities should take advantage of the immersive technology space and engage with students and school teachers and provide more clarity on the skills students need, and what one can expect, from a career in the construction industry.
- Universities should explore opportunities with school teachers to develop teaching activities using the VCS tour as the basis for class discussions and case studies. For example, in physics, pre-tensioned reo and material science, as well as essential project skills.
- The VCS tour exposes students to diverse role models and projects in an immersive environment and has an impact on changing students' perceptions and it develops career optimism in construction.




Overall, students' comments on the VCS tour experience were greatly positive. Students found the virtual experience very interesting and 'cool'. Most students did not have any previous experience with virtual reality and were excited with the opportunity to see virtual reality in 'action'.

Students were interested in being on the construction site. "Whoa" and "it was so real" were comments students remarked on the moment they finished the VCS tour. Some female students also commented "there are so many women in construction" and appeared genuinely surprised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Virtual experience is an excellent engagement tool with high school students.
- The VCS tour has the potential to be used as a medium to generate discussions and class activities using an actual construction project as the backdrop.

POSTSCRIPT

From August 2019 to June 2021, the VCS tour has been experienced by university students in Brisbane and Indonesia. The VCS tour has also made its way to high school students from 20 schools across Queensland - Cairns, Innisfail, Townsville, Brisbane, Toowoomba and Redland. Feedback from students and teachers has been greatly positive and I look forward to sharing this experience to more students in all regions. 

To download a copy of Dr Fiona Lamari's report visit nawic.com.au

THE NAWIC BRIGHT IDEAS GRANT

In August 2020, NAWIC announced an exciting program to encourage the establishment of a small business or start-up in the construction industry. The Bright Ideas Grant provides \$20,000 in seed funding for a female, group or partnership to help with the launch of a new business venture, programme, or idea related to the industry.

The inaugural Bright Ideas Grant was awarded to Tonielle Dempers, Graduate Architect at Parry and Rosenthal Architects and Christine Savage, Architect at fjmt studio. Tonielle and Christine's proposal centred on creating a tool to make users' dream homes more tangible by providing collated interior design palettes that are local, easy to source and tailored to desired price points. One of the main aims of the tool is to make the interior design process more efficient and less daunting for builders, design professionals and home renovators who may be unsure how to bring their visions to life.

Congratulations Tonielle and Christine. We can't wait to promote your 'Bright Idea' to our members towards the end of this year. **n**



The Bright Ideas Grant winners, Tonielle Dempers and Christine Savage



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EMPOWERING WOMEN

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AT NBRS ARCHITECTURE

NBRSARCHITECTURE (NBRS) was established in 1968 and has grown into a 100 strong company. Since that time there has been a strong focus on closing the gender gap, with the company proudly supporting a 50/50 split across the office; most enjoyably we have equal representation of female Studio Principals and Leads across both our Sydney and Melbourne studios. At NBRS our vision is to create life changing environments for the people, communities, and institutions we serve, and we are proud to have women leading this charge across our board, studio, project, and research teams. This diversity of thought is underpinned by our values and reflected in the projects we choose to engage with.

In 2018, NBRS elected our first female director, Samantha Polkinghorne. Samantha, with over 35 years of experience, plays an important role in understanding the issues that relate specifically to woman in the workplace. During her professional career she has seen positive shifts in cultural norms around women in the construction industry and looks forward to further opportunities

in improving the workplace for women. Samantha also leads the firm's Heritage Studio, a 9 strong team - 8 of whom are women. This leadership of a majority female team invigorates her campaign for our staff across the entire office, by working closely with a group of smart, established, and forward-thinking women.

Leading our Melbourne practice and the Justice Studio is Anthea Doyle. Anthea's dedication to her responsibilities and ability to communicate has quickly established her as a strong role model within the practice and amongst our client and consultant community. Aside from a passion for her Justice work, Anthea also has a great energy for supporting those around her which is demonstrated by generously mentoring her team. Anthea's ability to be a flexible and understanding leader epitomises her professional and compassionate approach to all that she does.

Being a woman in the construction industry does not come without its challenges; at NBRS we are keen to provide a strong support network for everyone in the

company. An Associate in our Education Studio, Carmit Harnik Saar who is led and supported by Education Studio Principal, Macella Salzmann, both bring contemporary viewpoints in the design and construction of a range of specialised school facilities. Carmit and Macella both bring their extensive architectural skills, alongside personal perspective as female architects, to creating life changing environments. In their leadership positions, these women demonstrate that experience and professionalism trump any gender stereotypes, furthering the cause for true equality within the profession.

NBRS is excited about the opportunities unfolding for women as the company grows, opportunities for professional growth alongside activities that will benefit our communities. It is women such as Samantha, Anthea, Macella and Carmit alongside all the other women of NBRS, who together provide support, illuminate points of difference and bring empathy to empower an ever-changing workplace.

www.nbrsarchitecture.com

we are *twenty five*



*Emily Lockey, Project Engineer, CPB Contractors
Project: Sydney Metro City and Southwest Project*

HOW NAWIC BECAME A FORCE FOR CHANGE IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

An interview with Professor Paula Gerber

Faculty of Law, Monash University
& NAWIC Founder (Australia) and Life Member

While we still have some way to go to realise NAWIC's mission of 25% female participation in the construction industry, there's no denying the sector has evolved in many positive ways over the past 25 years. Barriers have been removed, culture has improved, misconceptions about gender-specific roles have decreased and resources have been created. As a result, a growing number of women are pursuing construction careers.

The opportunities available today would not be possible without the trailblazers who have inspired, driven change and propelled the industry forward. In celebration of our 25th Anniversary, we pay tribute to the remarkable Professor Paula Gerber; founder of the Australian NAWIC affiliate. We asked Professor Gerber to take a look back and reflect upon her career, her early memories of the construction industry and her reasons for establishing NAWIC in Australia.

What inspired you to pursue a career in construction law?

Like many others, I found myself in the construction industry by chance. After completing my law degree at QUT, I was offered a job with the international law firm Baker McKenzie in Canada. I waited in London for my immigration papers to be approved, but the Canadians decided they already had enough lawyers, and so wouldn't give me a work permit. Baker McKenzie in London came to the rescue. They offered me a role with a partner establishing a construction law practice, and encouraged me to enrol in the brand new Master of Science (Construction Law) King's College was offering. I am proud to say that I graduated top of my class.

I had always wanted to work in the US after spending time

being a camp counsellor at a Californian summer camp. As luck would have it, I won a 'green card' in the lottery which the Americans run as part of their immigration program. This enabled me to live and work in the US full time. After passing the California bar exam, I was hired by a boutique construction law firm in Los Angeles, Hunt Ortman, as their first-ever female attorney. After working for five years as a solicitor in London and five years as an attorney in California, I was head hunted by Mallesons (now King & Wood Mallesons) to join their construction law practice, and decided it was time to return to Australia. I went on to become a partner at Maddocks, before moving from private practice into academia in 2000. I completed a PhD in children's rights and am now in the fairly unique position of specialising in both international human rights law and construction law.

What are your memories of the industry when you commenced your career?

When I was working in London in the late 1980s, I was sent by my firm to a building site in the Canary Wharf development, to interview a witness as part of a construction law dispute. The man at the security gate asked me if I was the stripper! It turns out the lads had booked a stripper as part of the send-off for a co-worker who was leaving the job that day to return to Canada. He was shocked when I said I was a solicitor, not a stripper! I don't think the same mistake would be made today!

In my first six years in the industry, I didn't have one female client and I was often the only woman on the sites I visited. I was often mistaken for a secretary and constantly made to feel like I had to prove myself. On most sites, there were girly pictures on the walls, no female toilet facilities and the men were either very rude or overly protective. I was often spoken down to, including by one lawyer on the other side of a case about concrete. He decided he needed to educate me about the process of mixing cement by likening it to making a cake; something he assumed I should understand, being a woman. It was difficult to know when to call out bad behaviour, because it was the norm.

Nevertheless, I loved working in the industry, the people I worked with, the concrete nature of construction and I thoroughly enjoyed going to site.

Why did you see the need to establish NAWIC in Australia?

I joined the NAWIC Santa Monica chapter during my time working in California, and immediately felt welcomed, supported and

'at home'. I got to meet a diverse group of women, including architects, engineers, tradeswomen and interior designers. It was a stark contrast from the male dominated environment I spent my days in. NAWIC brought together women of all backgrounds and ages and provided great mentoring and knowledge sharing.

When I moved back to Australia, in January 1995, I realised how far we were lagging behind the US, when it came to the number of women involved in construction and the culture of the industry. In America, female pin-ups and men-only toilet facilities were not tolerated. Whilst affirmative action legislation helped attract women into the construction industry, NAWIC's work also played a part (it was established in 1953). I was determined to try and do something to see more women in construction in Australia and so went about establishing NAWIC in Australia.

How did you establish NAWIC in Australia?

With the support of Mallesons, I effectively put my career on hold to establish NAWIC. It all began in April 1995, when I organised a breakfast event at Mallesons in Melbourne. 120 women attended many of whom had such a wonderful time, they didn't want to leave. Within five months, NAWIC was incorporated. We had over 250 members with chapters in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane. Within a year, we had over 600 members Australia-wide and additional chapters in Hobart and Darwin.

What did NAWIC look like 25 years ago?

It didn't take long for NAWIC to attract the interest of the Government and construction firms. I met with the then Federal Minister for Construction, Senator Chris Schacht, and outlined NAWIC's aim of providing a support network for women in construction as well as our strategies to attract and retain women in the industry. Soon after NAWIC received \$100,000 in seed funding through AusIndustry. This was followed by a similar sized grant from the Department of Education, which funded the production of a video about careers for girls in construction (called Women on the Rise) which was sent to career counsellors at every government school across Australia.

The media also loved NAWIC. I featured in many publications and on radio and television, including the ABC, to promote the association. As our profile grew, more and more companies wanted to be involved. Industry giants, including Multiplex, Lendlease and Fletcher Building, came onboard as sponsors. We also sparked the interest of Qantas who funded an international exchange program for one of our members in partnership with NAWIC US. Under this arrangement, a sparky from Adelaide went to Austin, Texas for a year, whilst an architect from the US came and worked in Brisbane.

In the first year, our core activities were meetings and networking events. In our second year we established the NAWIC Awards, an idea borrowed from the US, organised site tours and held monthly dinners with guest speakers. Work experience, educational seminars, mentoring and scholarship programs soon followed.

What are your proudest NAWIC achievements?

NAWIC forms a wonderful part of my life. I have so many amazing memories, but the standouts would have to be the



video, the international exchange program and the awards. NAWIC developed a reputation for holding the industry's best events. Men would make up approximately 40% of our attendees, because our events were not only educational but also fun. Another achievement I'm particularly proud of was being awarded the US NAWIC Crystal Vision Award in 1996, for my work establishing the Australian affiliate. I was the first non-American to win the award.

After four years involvement with NAWIC in the US, and another four years leading NAWIC Australia, I was nervous to step back and I was fearful the association I had worked so hard to build might fall apart. It was, after all, 'my baby'. However, I was delighted and relieved when other passionate women stepped up and I have relished seeing NAWIC not only thrive but also take off in new directions. I have little involvement with NAWIC these days, due to the demands on my time of three children and a busy career as a professor. But I continue to follow NAWIC, the achievements of its members and its contribution to the construction industry.

Where would you like to see NAWIC in 25 years?

I have to admit, I am depressed about the slow pace of change in the industry. Despite the benefits women bring to the industry, the macho culture still persists and we are discussing many of the same topics we did 25 years ago. We have made amazing progress, but there remains so much work to do. With that said, I am seeing more positive conversations, and movements such as #metoo are slowly filtering into construction.

I hope that in 25 years we see gender equality within the construction industry, such that organisations like NAWIC are no longer relevant or needed. To me, that has always been the measure of NAWIC's success. ■

I NEVER DREAMT NAWIC WOULD BECOME SUCH AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY LIFE



by Sandra Steele

Construction and Infrastructure Partner, K&L Gates & NAWIC National President (2008-2013) and Life Member

My first job in the construction industry came along quite early in my career. I followed a close friend of mine to work in the construction team of a national law firm in Brisbane. I loved the work and culture instantly. I have never looked back and have continued to practise in construction law ever since.

Having said that, I haven't always been in private practice. Through my NAWIC networks, an opportunity arose for me to join Lendlease in 2006. I absolutely loved my time there, I worked amongst a very talented team of lawyers and completely enjoyed being part of the business. I am grateful for the many opportunities provided to me during that time including the opportunity to work on so many interesting projects in a collaborative environment.

Lendlease is hugely supportive of women in construction and of NAWIC. Knowing that was a big factor in my decision to join the company. In 2013, I made the decision to return to private practice at K&L Gates.

Today I am the Practice Group Leader for the Real Estate and Construction Group Australia. I am a Construction and Infrastructure Partner and I work on construction, infrastructure and renewable energy projects. My work involves assisting my clients through all stages of a project's life - the contract formation stage, contract administration and dispute avoidance and if it becomes necessary, dispute resolution. I co-chair the Diversity Committee for K&L Gates in Australia and also sit on the Australian Board.

NAWIC - THE EARLY DAYS

I first joined NAWIC in 1996 in Brisbane. It was a very different organisation then. I initially joined to attend events and meet other women in the industry.

I moved to Sydney in 2000 and started a new job with a global law firm. At that time a colleague and friend of mine, who was on the NSW Chapter Education Committee, asked me to take her place on the committee as she was about to get married. I thought my involvement at that stage would be temporary - but I was very wrong about that! I became extremely ambitious for NAWIC and over the years I found I wanted to keep doing more.

When I first joined the Education Committee we were only then starting to look at offering university scholarships, mentoring programs and the like. The NAWIC I knew then was predominantly about events and those events were much smaller than the ones that NAWIC holds today. The events were an opportunity to bring women in construction together and to create a much needed network. Today's NAWIC is more about advocacy and leading change in the industry, it's about giving back.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MY TIME AT NAWIC

One of the proudest moments during my time at NAWIC was the launch of our Building a Better Future website in 2006.

The website had inspirational stories told by 80 NAWIC members aimed at encouraging women to enter

Promoting the Building a Better Future website



Past NAWIC Presidents - Jennifer Bicknell, Irene Wales and Sandra Steele



A Board meeting held during Sandra's tenure

"There are too many benefits to recall being part of NAWIC. On a personal level, I have made lifelong friends who share my passion for empowering women in the industry."

the construction industry. I was also very proud of the launch of the mentoring program with the Master Builders Association (MBA) and Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) which, in 2007-2008, mentored 150 women. Another highlight for me was the inaugural NAWIC International Women's Day (IWD) Scholarship in 2009. The IWD Scholarship offered funding for research and international travel for a white paper on affordable housing and increasing women's participation in building trades.

After a few years on the Education Committee I was elected to the NSW Chapter Board and after a few more years was elected the NSW Chapter President, a position I held until 2005. This led to my joining the National Board. I was elected NAWIC National President in June 2008, a role I held for five years. I have three beautiful daughters, Lucinda, Sarah and Eloise. When I was pregnant with my third (Eloise) I informed the National Board I was stepping down and that it was time for someone else to take over and lead NAWIC to even greater heights.

There are too many benefits to recall being part of NAWIC. On a personal level, I have made lifelong friends who share my passion for empowering women in the industry. Joining a NAWIC committee (and later the Board) enabled me to develop new skills in a safe environment. I loved that it was an industry-specific association from which I could learn, expand my network and share experiences.



Sandra's daughter Eloise visiting her at the office



The cocktail party which was part of the NAWIC 2007 Conference

THE GREATER NEED FOR WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

Whilst the perception of women in the industry has definitely changed there is still so much work to do. The percentage of women in the construction industry has not changed significantly since the 1990s, remaining at around 12% in Australia. A majority of the women represented in

this figure perform administrative work. Research conducted by the Victorian Government as part of its Women in Construction Strategy report shows that over the past 30 years women only make up around 2% of trade and semi-skilled workers in Australian construction¹.

The low representation of women in construction is what NAWIC strives to address and the key to change in my view is the education of both those in the industry and those seeking to enter it.

Despite the under-representation of women, there are many benefits of pursuing a career in the construction industry. The sector is resilient and as we all know infrastructure is booming in Australia and world-wide. There are an endless and diverse range of opportunities for a career in construction, both onsite and back at head office.

A career in construction allows you to work in a collaborative way and to really make a difference in your community and beyond. You can be involved in projects that transform and create a better environment for all of us.

I believe it is critically important for women to enter the industry. The construction industry has plenty to offer and women have plenty to offer the industry. Not to mention the economic benefits - we all know that gender diversity is good for business. Diversity of ideas and approaches drives growth and innovation. ■

1. <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-women-construction-strategy>

IN SAFE HANDS

— *Luisa Young shares her experiences of two decades in construction*



by **Narae Ko**

Senior Associate, Marketing and Communications, Unispace & NAWIC Member

Rising from in-house legal support to join the C-Suite is no mean feat, particularly for a young woman and mother of two in a traditionally male-dominated environment.

Luisa Young is Chief Risk Officer at global workplace design firm Unispace. A long-time NAWIC member, she has worked for some of the leading lights of property, including tenures at Stockland, Charter Hall and Scentre Group.

During two decades in the industry, she has worked across practically every aspect of risk management - from handling on-site safety concerns to complex financial compliance challenges.

But as Luisa explains, "construction was a pathway that unfolded in front of me rather than a conscious choice. It wasn't as though I was playing with bricks and mortar as a kid."

She began her career in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as a lawyer, working in a law firm before being given her first big break in Australia by property group Stockland, who recruited her as an in-house legal assistant. "I've always said that the industry chose me, and not the other way around," she remarks.

A PEOPLE-CENTRIC VIEW OF SAFETY

Luisa quickly realised that she had taken on more than just a desk job. Within a few months, she was making her way out to construction sites for the first time to respond to incidents and issues affecting both site workers and members of the general public.

Through these experiences, Luisa began to see health and safety issues in an entirely different light.

"I saw that safety isn't all about checkboxes and rules," she notes. "However, they come about, site incidents affect everyone on an intensely personal level. For me, I have to feel connected to the safety issues I'm dealing with, which is why it's so important to get out there and spend the time on site."

THE 'COST' OF STARTING A FAMILY

Although Luisa was building up her industry knowledge and enjoying her rapid progression within construction, there was one lingering question on her mind: what to do about starting a family?

Her early experiences in the legal sector had sharpened her understanding of the barriers facing women who hoped to pursue both career success and parenthood. As she rose through the ranks, she found herself increasingly disconcerted by the lack of female leaders within construction and wondered whether she might be forced to compromise her professional goals to have children.

"Pregnant women in construction were viewed as an inconvenience or a burden, and the few women who made it to the top all seemed to be those who had decided not to start families," says Luisa. "But I was incredibly fortunate to be working for a progressive employer at the time and they gave me the flexibility I needed to strike the right professional/personal balance. Not only did I feel encouraged and uplifted by my organisation, but I received the promotion I had worked so incredibly hard for."

FLEXIBILITY IS THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM

Luisa is encouraged by the progress that the construction industry has made to address gender inequality issues over the past decade, while acknowledging that there are still unconscious biases lingering for women and mothers. However, she suggests that perhaps the most significant change was Unispace's approach to flexible working and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The opportunity to work from home played a big part in making my post-maternity return to work a success. Unispace has always understood that working from home after dropping off the kids was just as productive as working from the office. Of





Luisa Young (second from right) with members of the Unispace team

course, in construction, there are days when there is no getting around the 7am onsite start, but I truly believe that COVID has permanently shifted attitudes towards flexible working. As a working mother, flexibility really is the key to the kingdom - it's what you need to manage the unexpected when the unexpected is occurring every single day."

DEALING WITH A ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION BUSINESS RISK

Problems certainly don't get much more unexpected than the COVID-19 pandemic. As Unispace's first ever Chief Risk Officer, Luisa led the organisation's response to COVID and helped navigate the many complexities involved in keeping workplace construction activity moving and keeping site workers safe through the pandemic. In fact, Luisa was just three months into the role when COVID arrived on Australian shores, leaving her facing some huge decisions with little time to prepare.

"My first task at Unispace was to upgrade our business continuity and crisis management plans and we were well underway with this when the pandemic arrived," she explains. "The challenge was that we didn't get the chance to test out any of our new plans. We just had to trust ourselves and run with them."

Luisa's initial response to COVID was to set up a central crisis management team, comprising members of the Unispace leadership team alongside the managing directors for each region, to help roll

out the plans across three regions. This structure helped channel the flood of incoming information regarding locally-instigated COVID measures, Government policies and restrictions and emerging supply chain issues.

"Every country was responding to the crisis in its own unique way, so the only approach that would allow us to manage all of these nuances and keep our on-the-ground site workers safe was to raise the bar across the globe and apply the most stringent protocols everywhere," she adds.

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION AROUND MENTAL HEALTH IN CONSTRUCTION

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a Chief Risk Officer, one of the subjects Luisa speaks most passionately about is workplace safety. But for Luisa, health and safety involves much more than just physical security.

"For me, the idea of feeling mentally secure and comfortable in your working environment is a precondition for any diversity and inclusion activity," she argues. "If you can't feel safe bringing your whole self into the workplace, you're going to struggle to flourish in that environment."

This question of mental health and wellbeing at work is a crucial concern for an industry that has sometimes struggled to protect workers from the rigours and pressures that come with the job.

"We need to encourage more conversations about mental wellness at work," she says. "The goal is

we are *Twenty five*



Luisa Young with her daughter Anaïs Kempe

to create a more open and inclusive culture and that's something that will benefit everyone working in construction, regardless of gender, race or background."

TRAILBLAZERS AND PATHFINDERS

Luisa has already enjoyed a hugely successful career in construction and she's not about to slow down any

"I certainly want to play my part in creating a more trodden path for other women to pursue."

time soon. While her priority is helping drive Unispace forward into the post-COVID world, she's also keenly committed to helping other women looking to make their mark on the construction industry.

She explains that "Trailblazers like Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz and Alison Mirams illustrate what is possible for women in construction and demonstrate outstanding leadership. I certainly want to play my part in creating a more trodden path for other women to pursue. My current role is a great vehicle for this, and it's a big priority for me, but I'm still figuring out how to do this as I go."

She might not have every one of the answers she's looking for (and who does?), but Luisa has already shown herself to be a fantastic role model for anyone looking to succeed in construction. And as she concludes, "The road wasn't easy, but with organisations such as NAWIC to help close gaps for women in this industry, I believe the future of women in construction is bright." ■



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Think Create Make



CH-CH-CHANGES

— a 30 year look back at the industry



by Becky Paroz

Director, Queen B Project System Pty Ltd
& 2019 Lendlease Crystal Vision Award Winner (QLD)

In 1989 I was in my senior year of schooling. I wasn't born into a great family life, so I worked during the school holidays to pay for my attendance. I worked on farms pruning vegetation and I worked construction jobs on the weekends when I could be snuck onto the site and no questions would be asked.

It wasn't the done thing back then, females onsite. There were no toilet facilities, no interest and hardly a thought given to it as a possibility. I'd get onsite and help clean up and install concrete joints and reo chairs to get ready for the next day's early pour. I'd hold heavy things up in place while someone else used the tools and I'd put down drainage socks. I also annoyed the hell out of my local architecture firm enough that they gave me some drafting work once or twice a week.

When I was accepted into the University of Southern Queensland's School of Engineering, I realised I already had exposure to the industry. I was a cadet draftsman (paid the glorious sum of \$3.33 an hour, no penalties, no minimum payment, calculated by the boss to the minute on my timesheet) working in the local council for 75% of the actual wage because I was under 21. I was constantly told I don't belong, I shouldn't be there and if I planned to stay, I'd better learn to fit in with the boys.

The calendars and the magazines were there, and they weren't going anywhere. Honestly, it hadn't even occurred to me to complain about them. I was there to learn, to become an engineer and a leader beyond that, not to worry about the décor.

I fell in love with the construction side of the industry. I moved away from design and discovered a talent for QA/QC, processes, technical writing and systemisation, as well as training and mentoring. I learned about electrical, mechanical, hydraulic, rail, buildings, infrastructure and fire services and how to communicate with a wide range of trades as a result

of my unorthodox career. I have been put in charge of graduate programs and I have been in front of so many audiences talking about systems and training in WHSQA&E that I cannot recall them all. I have also been part of the management teams of some of Queensland's most significant landmark projects.

The changes over the past 30 years have been remarkable. Every year I see more women embracing trades, engineering, estimating, mining, machine operation and becoming sisters in steel caps. I see groups like NAWIC start-up and flourish by supporting women in the industry with their goals. I see wages become fairer through the determination of the women who champion this industry.

I see men embrace the benefits that come with women being a part of the workforce and I see women thriving under the dynamic and challenging conditions that come with being a part of the industry.

I was told by my professor of engineering when I started, along with the eight other women out of the nearly 650 students undertaking engineering, that I was a forerunner, a beacon, a signal to the industry that we women were coming and we were going to stay. He didn't quite say it that way and I didn't quite understand what he meant then. As I reflect 30 years later over the course the industry has taken, and how far we as women have come to be represented as part of the workforce, I see what he meant. It has kept me going, kept me acting on behalf of, speaking out for, and training and mentoring the many young women I have had the pleasure to work with over the years.

I never gave up, I kept applying for the jobs I wanted, kept being in the face of the industry, doing whatever it took, whatever role came up, that allowed me to stay. Now, with the advocacy of NAWIC and many individuals, there are many more voices added to the chorus. I encourage you all to design the career you want, carve your name in the concrete and become the forerunners for the next 30 years of change. **■**



EQUALITY IS EQUALITY



An interview with Yvonne Pengilly

Assistant Commissioner Technical, QBCC
& NAWIC Member

As a child on a cattle and sheep property in Injune, Yvonne Pengilly didn't do 'girls' work. It was just work, and everyone in her family did all the jobs that needed to be done, regardless of gender. "If dad was tinkering with the tractor, you were out there tinkering too," she says. "You didn't have someone else to do a job - you just did it."

Yvonne has spent about 33 years of her 40-plus-year construction industry career on work sites, but when she started in the 1980s, there were few women onsite. "Through the '80s I do not recall there being other females in onsite positions, other than in final cleans and administrative positions," she says.

After Year 12, Yvonne wasn't sure what career path she would take. Later, when she married her first husband, who was in the building industry, she took on the roles that are especially important for a building business to succeed.

"I did estimates, ordered materials, scheduled labour, managed payroll and office administration and I did labouring on weekends, even when I was pregnant in '83.

"We think that there was a significant absence of women in the industry back then but there was a significant presence of women in family-owned businesses and they were influential on the industry.

"They may not have been counted or measured but so many successful businesses were done while women balanced a home and children, and it was a role they did, not only because it was necessary but because they were invested in the industry."

Yvonne says that the late 1980s saw the arrival of women landscapers and women working as site clerks but that was usually at more progressive companies.

In 1987, she took her first onsite job, as a business partner owning a subcontract business. When the need arose, she stepped into running the blockwork subcontract at a 15-storey high-rise development in Cairns.

"That was probably the catalyst for me first being recognised. Business owners involved in trade contracting there recommended me to other significant builders as a result of my days on site and further work that I did."

She later took an administration role in a consultant arrangement at another construction project office in Cairns.

"I realised people wanted to employ me but I didn't want to be locked into the exact hours I had to work. They recognised that I needed to have responsibility for my children, so I worked in the capacity of consultant rather than employee.

"I dropped my kids at school, went to the office, then picked them up after school, brought them back to the office, did some more work and then took them home later. This arrangement served well throughout the years whilst balancing being a mother, wife and progressing my career.

"In the late '80s and beginning of the '90s, I did a Certificate in Building Construction at TAFE and a CAD (computer-aided design and drafting) course because I wanted work in high-rise construction and I knew that you needed to understand the principles of design as well as building."

Next came an engineering degree, from 1994 to 1999. "I went to QUT with my results from TAFE and I said I 'want to do engineering'. They suggested I consider architecture but I wanted to be a project manager and I figured that if I had engineering and my CAD, I was well on my way."

Yvonne completed her engineering degree. "And I realised I still had a lot to learn but I also understood a lot about construction."

It was in the '90s that things started to change in regards to increased women's participation in the industry, she says. "During the '90s, I worked on a project that had female representatives as the architect, quantity surveyor and myself as the acting project manager.

"There were some forward-looking companies that often had a female director who was a wife or a partner, who was recognised as an equal, not in the background."

While progress was occurring in workplaces generally, significant challenges remained for women, including harassment.

"Sadly, I don't believe that behaviour, and a lack of action against bad behaviour, has changed very much in the industry.





“We think that there was a significant absence of women in the industry back then but there was a significant presence of women in family-owned businesses and they were influential on the industry.”

“I stood up and called it out when it was wrong. Probably to my own detriment at times but I had that resilience and that was built in by my family. Brought up on the land, resilience is something that is inherent,” she says.

She adds that she has witnessed poor behaviour both onsite and in offices and it is not restricted to gender. “There will always be jerks on site acting in a bad way. I never took them as representative of the industry, or of males. They were representative of

being brought up in a poor way and having no respect.

“I also see some women whose behaviour is abominable, but they don’t see it. They need to consider that as much as men do.”

Yvonne says boom times in the industry present opportunities for women and they need to grab them.

“It’s a time when they can climb through the ranks, where they may have sat back previously but it’s a market-driven need.

“I still get nervous when I walk into a room and don’t know anyone but it’s key to cross that line. By nature, I’m really shy and not confident but I make myself do that because I want to learn from those people and I don’t care if they don’t even remember my name.”

Reflecting on her career and how things could be improved for women onsite now, Yvonne’s response is emphatic. “The most difficult thing in my career was the lack of toilet facilities for women,” she says. “For a multi-million-dollar job, it would only cost \$7,800 per annum to cater for it. That’s nothing.

“When I owned the business, we didn’t have that many women onsite because of the nature of the industry but we had female facilities equivalent to the men’s.

“There should also be a breakout space if women don’t want to sit with men. There should be a quiet

space and there should be a roughneck space,” she says.

Yvonne says the industry has been slower than other industries in adopting flexible work arrangements for issues such as male responsibility for family commitments.

Family is the most important thing in Yvonne’s life. She makes no apologies for pausing this interview to take a phone call from her daughter and later mentions that she is happy to structure the work of one of her team around his family’s medical and schooling commitments.

“The thing I’m most proud of is being a mum and watching my girls grow up with the same qualities that I have - equality is equality.

“To be a wife and a mum and to be a family member, there’s no doubt, they’re my proudest moments. Your career is not going to be written on your tombstone.”


Yvonne says her career highlights include establishing Women in Construction Far North Queensland, which promotes engagement of engineers, architects and builders through educational events. She is also proud of her work with Queensland’s Safer Buildings Taskforce, as QBCC representative on the Building Regulators’ Forum, chairing other QBCC subcommittees and as a member of the QBCC Reconciliation Action Plan Committee.

She enjoys her role as Board Member on the Board of Professional Engineers Queensland as the Building and Construction representative. “As a ministerial appointment, it’s a real sign of support for women.”

What advice would she offer today to the young version of Yvonne Pengilly about to embark on her career?

“Love what you’re doing. If you love something, you’ll succeed. It doesn’t matter what you haven’t succeeded at before.

“And for mums and dads, if you’re playing with Lego, explain to your kids how it works, why something stays upright. Let them see the joy of starting something and finishing it.

“That’s what you do in building. You start with a piece of paper and you end up with something that’ll be around for a hundred years or more. Something tangible. You’re just one cog in making that happen but you’re an important cog.” 

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME



by Alison Mirams

CEO, Roberts Co
& 2018 Laing O'Rourke Business Woman
of the Year Award Winner (NSW)

On my first day working on a construction site I rang my now husband at lunchtime and said I've made a mistake. I'd been sent to a project in Chatswood, the site office was in a retail shop and at lunchtime the smell of hot chips drifted through the site office. I had a tiny desk and my boss told me I didn't need a computer.

Day two wasn't an improvement. I was sent to head office for training where I was told - we will never say thank you so just suck it up. It was a massive culture shock. A few weeks in I was told by a site foreman "you won't last." But I did - for 16 years. It was a hard environment but there was something very addictive about it.

In my first subcontractor meeting, the team spoke about window mullions and despite having a building degree, I had no idea what they were talking about. That night I looked up the definition of mullions in the paper dictionary, I couldn't just google it in the meeting as Google wasn't invented.

We had a fax machine and each day's correspondence was photocopied (as fax paper faded) and placed in a 'red folder' and it was circulated to the managers each day. Once read, you'd sign your name on the

front and pass it on. Imagine the joy when email was rolled out and the red file and formal posted letters were disbanded.

The site office was a sea of paper. Every project had an A1 plan printer. Supervisors carried plans in their back pockets. We had racks of A1 plans hanging next to the plan bench where all important decisions were made. There was no BIM or 3D design. Floppy disks were 5.25" and held a massive 360KB of data! We operated on MS DOS - I'm talking pre-Microsoft Windows.

Each day the foremen would head out onsite at 7am. They'd only come back in for food and rest. Lunch was at the team table, but the conversation was not very 'becoming.' That was the 1990s. The foremen would carry a black book where they wrote everything down. The daily head count was completed walking the floor and counting men (and they were men). If the men moved floors during the count, they got counted twice. To say it was unsophisticated is an understatement.

The supervisors and engineers would come back to the office at 4pm en masse to do their paperwork and have beers. Practical jokes were common. If you had an office,





*The Roberts Co International
Women's Day 2021 High Tea*

going on holidays was a dangerous proposition for what the team might do to your office whilst away. iPhones and iPads weren't invented. If you needed to make a phone call you returned to the site office where everyone had a desk phone. Two-way radios and shouting were the main mode of communication on site.

One of the cadet's jobs onsite, apart from stacking the beer fridge, was to take photos of construction with THE site camera (this was a far better job than printing drawings all day). If we needed the photos urgently, we asked for the one hour development of the film at the chemist. The international currency of beer was alive and well onsite. It was common for variation work to be undertaken for a case of beer or two. I always kept a note of the beer trades that occurred onsite to ensure I didn't pay money, if the agreed currency was beer.

"Thinking about today, it feels like we've taken two steps forward and one step backward."

I wasn't given a toilet onsite, I had to use a retail centre down the road. There was porn on the walls in the lunch rooms and on the inside of the tool boxes. As I'd walk past the workers would lift the tool box lid and you'd hear the giggles. Wolf whistles were common - it wasn't a compliment.

That's how it was in the 1990s. Thinking about today, it feels like we've taken two steps forward and one step backward.

We've embraced technology, we are more sophisticated and our sites are safer (we don't have riggers riding the hook anymore). iPads and iPhones have made communication easier (perhaps too easy with everyone cc'd), but crane bookings can still be found on whiteboards. We pour concrete the same way, formwork is the same, albeit with some systems, and we still hand lay bricks. Sadly, we have become too politically correct. We have lost the practical jokes, the fun and the side-splitting laughter from the 1990s. Sadly, we are only 18.1% female (2% of trades) and

only 13% of managers are female. Presenteeism is high and 'busy' is worn as a badge of honour - the industry is obsessed with working six and seven days per week.

Technology is advancing but it's being built in silos, not industry-wide. Offsite prefabrication is the great hope to drag the industry into the 21st century.

The industry has become more sophisticated but has not holistically changed. I wonder if we can radically change in the next 25 years or if we will still be the same in 2046? **n**



Alison Mirams is a female trailblazer in the construction industry. Alison can be seen here signing an agreement with iDiC's CEO, Adam Goodes. Key to the agreement is the commitment to build capability and capacity of iDiC's Indigenous subcontractors as well as providing opportunities for them to work on Roberts Co projects and support corporate activities. To find out more visit idefcon.com.au

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AN INDUSTRY OPENING ITS ARMS TO WOMEN

An interview with Allison Smith and Fiona Tellefson

Executive Managers, Urban Development and
Project Management, APP Corporation
& NAWIC Members



While construction continues to be a male-dominated industry, there are pockets where gender is less of a concern for women considering a career in this field. Meet Allison Smith and Fiona Tellefson, Executive Managers with property and infrastructure consultancy APP Corporation.

Allison and Fiona lead different areas within the APP business. Allison is the Executive Manager for Urban Development whilst Fiona is the Executive Manager for Project Management. Both oversee teams nationally and have been in the property industry for over 25 years. They've seen the industry evolve over time and share their observations with NAWIC.

We started by asking Allison and Fiona about their career journeys

A: At 18, I spent a year dabbling as an assistant town planner and taking a sports scholarship in tennis. I ultimately decided that town planning was my first love and moved into the private sector at age 25 to work on land development and planning consulting. Years later I transitioned into a Project Management/Development Management career, when I joined APP. They were a project management company when I joined. We won the Edmondson Park project, which was a master planned community. APP's urban business grew from there and I helped to grow and diversify this division. I've also had the privilege of being part of APP's executive team since 2015, steering the national business.

F: I graduated as a civil engineer in the early 90s, which back then wasn't specialised like it is today. There were very few women studying engineering then. My first role was with design consultants Irwin Consult, now WSP, as a structural engineer. Over time I made the move into



Allison Smith

"Women communicate differently, at a different emotional level, and we look at things differently. These days diverse thinking is encouraged, but back in the day, not so much."

Allison Smith



Fiona Tellefson in APP's
Melbourne office in 2010

project management because I wanted to be involved in the project lifecycle, rather than purely the structural elements. I joined APP in 2003 and have had the opportunity to lead projects, manage regions and more recently have managed the national project management division and the broader business.

What inspired you to pursue a career in the construction industry?

A: I always had a love of geography. My older sister, working in local government, would regularly come home and share how she was building communities and cities. That was it! To this day, planning projects continues to excite me.

F: I enjoyed maths and science subjects at school, now referred to as STEM. I was intrigued by how buildings were built and wanted to pursue that.

Were you faced with any barriers when you started your career?

A: On the contrary, in the early years working in local government and the private sector, I found equal opportunity. Moving into project management, I found it very much a man's world. I was different to traditional project managers because of my background and the

construction industry was a very 'hard' place. All the administration jobs were held by women, but there were women in professional services and particularly in environmental, engineering and planning services. Fortunately, I had a very supportive manager.

F: Going straight into a design office consultancy, it wasn't so much of a concern for me. There was a senior female in the business at the time and management were good. I didn't find it blokey because primarily I dealt with architects and they were used to dealing with women. I did find though that when I went onsite into site sheds, there'd be lots of inappropriate things on the walls.

What have been the main challenges you have faced and how did you overcome them?

A: In the beginning there were occasions where a client would treat me differently. That is, the client preferred authority coming from a man rather than a woman. In response to this, I learned to manipulate the teams and their gender base.

Women communicate differently, at a different emotional level, and we look at things differently. These days diverse thinking is encouraged, but back in the day, not so much.

F: The key challenge I faced initially was not because I was a female, but because I was young, ambitious and career-focussed. My time frame was different to those around me and I was often told: "You need more experience."

Many women face the challenge of balancing a career with parenting. I don't have kids so haven't had to juggle competing priorities. Having a national role requires a lot of travel and I've always been supported in this way. I also see how difficult it can be for women combining kids and career to build their industry network. Networks are important for industry engagement and building relationships that create referrals for work can assist greatly with the ability to perform and then win the repeat business.

What have been the main highlights of your career to date?

A: Having seen some of the people that have worked for me go on to succeed in their careers, has been a real highlight. To think I can have an influence on others, to give them work they will love, is satisfying.

F: I am proud of the variety of roles I've had. Coming to Sydney and joining APP, moving to Victoria to grow the office from 10 to 40 people, and then moving into a national role.

My involvement in some of APP's signature projects such as the Australian Grand Prix and Building the Education Revolution are highlights, together with facilitating career progression into senior roles for many APP employees.

What are the most significant changes you have seen over the past 25 years for women working in the industry?

A: Far more women in leadership. Back in the day, there weren't any women in charge of state or local government, let alone in diverse roles. That said, it still feels odd today to go into a room with an all-female project team, whereas it's not unusual to see an all-male team.

F: All the improvements in the roles available to women: onsite, in trades, in leadership roles and directors of firms. People can aspire to roles, irrespective of gender.

What do you see as the benefits for women of a career in the industry in 2021?

A: The industry is opening its arms to women and working hard for gender equality, with bad behaviour being called out. Women bring diverse thinking to the table and increasing flexibility is allowing this to occur.

F: For everyone, flexibility in working arrangements

has greatly improved. Our ability to work on projects interstate, without having to do as much travel, means increased opportunities. There are also more female role models and ambassadors across the industry, which is very positive.

What is one piece of advice you would give to other women who are considering a career in the industry?

A: Don't be silent on your needs to be met. If you need to leave early to pick up the kids, be open because it's acceptable. It's all about balance; you need to be accessible and smart employers understand this.

F: Do what you enjoy doing. Just because it's been a male environment, don't let this put you off if you have a genuine interest in the industry. Build your network and build good industry connections. There are a lot of people out there willing to assist you in succeeding.

Fast forward 25 years, what do you wish for women working in the industry?

A: That the feeling of inferiority and the imposter syndrome has gone altogether.

F: That we are talking about people in the industry, not 'women.' Also, I hope for more women in leadership generally and particularly in this industry. **n**



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Congratulations NAWIC on 25 Years!

Diversity in the workplace is integral to organisational success. It's all about bringing the best minds together, sharing ideas and collaborating to create positive outcomes for our clients and people.

APP has been a proud member of NAWIC since 2010. Like NAWIC, we understand the value of having unique qualities, experiences and perspectives around the table. Over the past 30 years women have consistently made up only 2% of trade and semi-skilled workers in construction.

There's so much more to be done! To all the amazing NAWIC members who make it happen, thank you for advocating positive change for women in our industry. We applaud your achievements and you have our ongoing support.

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW



by Elia Basso

Founder and Director, Basso Project Management
& NAWIC Member

The year was 1996. Madam Butterfly (Susie O'Neill) won gold at the Summer Olympics in Georgia, Monica Seles won the Australian Open tennis tournament, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was on the cover of TIME Magazine's 100 Women of the Year series and of course, NAWIC Australia was born.

I had been a woman in construction for ten years when NAWIC first began. I was 18 years old when I started my first job in construction. Thirty six years later, I'm still here and my project management firm is in its 19th year.

The early years were certainly the toughest as a young, inexperienced woman in the male-dominated construction industry.

I cannot remember exactly how many job applications and companies I applied to for my first job that knocked me back. That may not seem strange, but the main reason I was not considered was because I was female. There were no political correctness or discrimination considerations - I was told quite bluntly that I would not be hired because I was a female. After being told in one interview, "There is no way we are hiring a woman," a week later I received a call, "well I need to hire you because you were the best of a bad bunch. I don't want you here, I just have no choice." Such was being a woman in construction at the time.

For six months at that job when I walked into a room, my colleagues, all of whom were men, would get up and walk out. I eventually won them over and we became mates. But it took over six months.

I arrived on my project site one day, to find a line of builders at the site entrance, "you're not coming on site. There's no women allowed on this site sweetheart." I laughed and walked past them. They just didn't know what to do then.

In 1985, one of my mates decided she wanted to be

a carpenter, so took herself off to TAFE. She got an apprenticeship after a long time looking as no one would hire a woman. Being on site was a nightmare for her - none of the men would assist or guide her. No one, even her boss who hired her, would provide any help. The cliché of the time was used: "well, you are the one that wants to be a woman in a man's world, so you work it out." She only lasted the week. She couldn't take it, so sadly gave up.

Have things changed? Of course they have, sometimes. A project I was working on only 18 months ago failed to install the stairs up into the female toilets. The Tier 2 commercial builder on the project didn't seem to believe it was important as I was probably the only female coming to site and using them. So, he told me I could use the male toilets if I really needed to go.

I was lucky. I had the benefit of growing up with a strict Italian father, so no one scared me onsite or in meetings, no matter how hard they tried. I was also fortunate enough to have some wonderful supportive men mentoring me when I was young and learning.

The early days in the industry for women were not easy. Although we could wear stilettos onsite. I'm sorry, what OH&S? As a woman you needed to love the work, have a passion for it and be good at what you did. The boys' club still exists, but is much more respectful now when it comes to women. The value that women bring to the industry is now being acknowledged and appreciated.

Although there have been significant improvements, equality still evades our industry. It is much better now than it was then, but it still needs some work. As much as the construction industry can sometimes frustrate the hell out of me, I still love it and hope to continue working in it for a long time to come. Unless I win the lotto that is, then I'm gone. ■

we celebrate women

Jennifer Marks,
Director and Mum, Built

RADMILA DESIC APPOINTED A MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA



His Excellency the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC, Governor of Queensland, presented Radmila with her award on 6 May at Government House, Queensland

Change can be slow, but dedicated champions are key. Mrs Radmila Desic AM is one of these champions, playing a key role in advancing women in the construction field. Radmila was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day 2021 Honours List for her significant service to women in the construction industry, and to unemployed youth.

A carpenter and joiner by trade, Radmila admits that she has faced her fair share of resistance as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field. Despite this, and perhaps in spite of this, Radmila has been a significant advocate for gender equity in trades, and is spurred on by the positive progress being made in her home state of Queensland.

Radmila has been involved in a number of roles with the Queensland Government and other organisations, associations and committees which seek to progress women in the trades. Most notably, she was Queensland Chapter President of the National Association of Women in Construction from 2007 to 2010, and former National Director and Vice-President of the association. Radmila was also involved with BUSY at Work, a not-for-profit organisation which provides career opportunities to unemployed youth. Despite her many roles and accomplishments, Radmila is quick to note that she is not alone in her advocacy. She is inspired by the efforts of many women, and hopes that the public will take note of their collective action and progress.

When asked about her appointment in the Order of Australia, Radmila describes her shock at learning of her appointment. "I actually didn't believe it. To come out of these roots and receive this recognition is extremely overwhelming".

The 'roots' that Radmila talks about refers to her upbringing as a first-generation immigrant in Australia. Radmila moved to Australia at the age of seven with her parents and sister, after an earthquake destroyed their home in Bar, Montenegro. Her mother worked three jobs, while her father worked in Western Australia, flying in and out to visit them. Radmila explains that "it's really hard to describe what this award means to my family and I. We certainly would have had a different life if we had stayed in Montenegro during the Balkan war."

Radmila admits that she was initially interested in pursuing archaeology in university; however, ended up leaving home and looking for work, where she stumbled across the Queensland Housing and Construction Group training scheme through Centrelink. The scheme allowed her to trial different trades - with bricklaying, carpentry and joinery being some of her favourites - and was where her love for the trades industry first started.

Radmila hopes that more people will nominate others for an Order of Australia to encourage those who are making contributions to their communities. "I feel like an imposter most of the time since I'm just doing what I'm passionate about - seeing change. But this award has re-energised me and built confidence that I'm on the right path. If there's anyone that you recognise as worthy, you should definitely put the time and effort in to nominating them. It is lifechanging and uplifting."

The Governor-General His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) echoes this sentiment, noting that "the Order of Australia is a wonderful way to recognise and celebrate achievement, service and contribution to our communities." ■

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CIT

— *challenging stereotypes to empower female tradies*

Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) is proving that trades are not just for the boys and that the range of employment benefits on offer in these exciting industries are equally available to women.

Trade careers offer flexible working hours, travel opportunities, a continuous stream of job opportunities, a sense of pride at the completion of a job and great salaries. CIT is committed to supporting females who want to pursue a career in the trades and has a range of support services on offer for interested employers and students.

Let's hear from some of CIT's amazing female teachers and students who are challenging Canberrans to trade in the stereotypes of trades being just for the blokes.

HEAVY VEHICLE MECHANICS OFFERS A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

Three young and determined heavy commercial vehicle mechanical technology apprentices are excelling in their chosen field. Emma Tangye, Rachael Heufel and Susan Towers agree their experience working in the industry, mostly alongside men, has been rewarding.

Susan is a first-year apprentice whose work experience last year led to a job with Asset Construction Hire. She works on boom and scissor lifts and heavy diesel vehicles and she describes her experience enthusiastically saying, "I'm loving every minute of it!"

Like Susan, Rachael is also studying a Certificate III in Heavy Commercial Vehicle Mechanical Technology (AUR31116) and works with Southern Truck Centre in Queanbeyan. She is building her experience both at work and through hands-on training at CIT. "Eventually I want to become a

manager within the trade or even start my own workshop one day. I'm working my way up," Rachael said.

Emma works as a Fleet Mechanic for the Snowy Monaro Hydro maintaining and repairing chainsaws, excavators, graders and rollers and is studying a second qualification, Certificate III in Mobile Plant Technology (AUR31216). Emma is living her dream and encourages other women to follow theirs'. "Don't let anyone hold you back because you're a female," she said.

Consensus among the three driven apprentices is that their greatest challenge is physical strength, but they see their gender as an advantage that, combined with their skillset, allows them to make a stand-out contribution in the workplace. "We're great at diagnostic analysis and have the attention-to-detail to put pieces together the right way without rushing," Emma said.

All three see a bright future in the industry and feel they are fully supported at their workplaces and at CIT. "Times have changed. The guys are helpful and supportive," Rachael said. "I've found a good support network," Susan added.



Heavy commercial vehicle mechanical technology apprentices Emma Tangye, Rachael Heufel and Susan Towers



CIT graduate Sophie Huddleston is now an electrician working in Canberra

"Often when people talk about being a woman in the trades, they talk about challenges and issues. I found the exact opposite has been true. My colleagues have been very supportive and encouraging."

Sophie Huddleston

with a positive attitude and show an eagerness to learn, people will want to help you out. Go in with an open mind and a willingness to learn and you'll smash it. Hard work pays dividends."

She found her studies at CIT to be particularly helpful. "I enjoyed studying at CIT. A lot of the teachers were really passionate about the trades and they want to impart their knowledge. The subjects can be challenging but with the right attitude you'll succeed."

HARD WORK PAYS DIVIDENDS FOR CIT GRADUATE

CIT graduate Sophie Huddleston had worked in a few industries before deciding on a career in electrical technology. Now employed as an electrician in Canberra, Sophie is proud of the work she does and finds it very rewarding.

Working as an electrician is different to some her previous jobs, which include farming as well as working as a photographer's assistant and a teacher in South Australia. Sophie wanted to change careers to something more hands-on and practical. "It all started with a conversation with a friend. He was studying to become an electrician. The idea interested me, and I also thought it might be a chance for me to show up some of the guys," Sophie said.

Sophie started her studies in South Australia, before moving to the ACT to complete her Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician (UEE30811) at CIT. She now works at Australian Smart Group on a variety of projects, including upgrades at Canberra Hospital. "I'm enjoying both the practical and theoretical parts of the job," Sophie said.

"You have to be switched on the whole time. To do the job you have to keep all the maths and theory in the back of your mind, while working on the practical angles. There is also a great team environment in my current job, which I love. Often when people talk about being a woman in the trades, they talk about challenges and issues. I found the exact opposite has been true. My colleagues have been very supportive and encouraging."

Sophie said it was all about attitude. "If you walk in

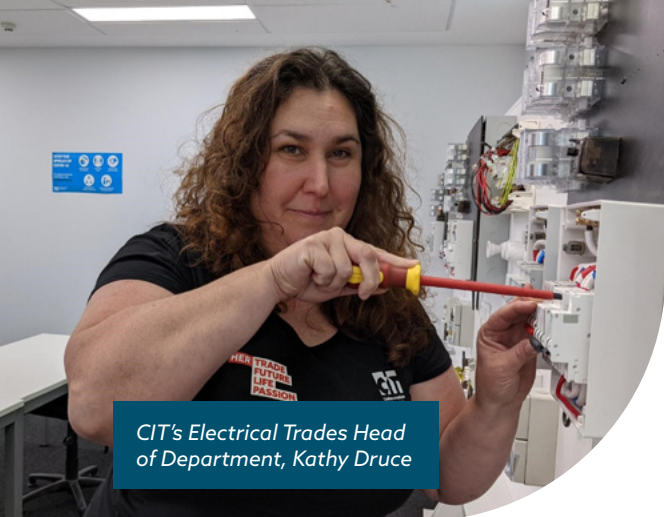
Sophie has noticed an overall increase in women working in the trades and she said this might be the result of improved awareness and visibility of career paths in the industry. "At school I never thought about a career in the trades. Now there are more options presented to students, especially women, rather than just directing people down one path."



KAREN ABEL - CONSTRUCTION HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Karen Abel is CIT's first female Construction Head of Department and one of CIT's many brilliant women leaders. As a champion for women in construction with over two decades of industry experience, Karen continues to inspire her students and continues to make CIT a great place to receive high-quality training and education.

"I've always felt supported and accepted throughout my career, especially from my male colleagues at CIT," Karen said. "I started as an apprentice in carpentry in 1998 at a time when female apprentices in trades



CIT's Electrical Trades Head of Department, Kathy Druce

women don't want to do dirty work - it's just not true," Kathy said.

Kathy completed a Bachelor of Science at the ANU before choosing to pivot to a trade career - something she knew would be more hands-on with good career prospects and a great salary. Ironically, her studies at CIT ultimately led her back to a career in casual teaching while still working in the electrical industry.

"I have always had a passion for learning and love sharing new ways of thinking and doing things. I was often sprung helping my fellow classmates with what we were learning while the teacher was out of the room, so coming back to CIT and starting as a casual teacher felt natural to me" Kathy said.

Kathy has managed to achieve all of this while raising two children, something she admits was a constant juggle. "The demands on an apprentice are high. Adding a pregnancy and then a young baby into the mix was at times a struggle and something that some male colleagues found hard to understand. Moving to full-time teaching was a no-brainer and definitely suited me having a family," Kathy said.

While Kathy acknowledges that barriers do still exist for women in trades, she says that with the right support and training the girls can easily outperform the boys and she is seeing this in some high-performing female students. "2021 has seen an overall increase in women enrolling as apprentices in a range of trades at CIT, including construction, carpentry, refrigeration, plumbing and metal fabrication and we hope to see this trend continue."

Kathy continues to enjoy her teaching career and is a champion for females in her industry. **n**

were distinctly uncommon. I ran my own carpentry business, working on commercial and residential projects as well as leading major Federal Government projects."

Karen is very supportive of the work done by NAWIC and similar organisations and is passionate about the potential for these groups to collaborate to build the capacity of women in her industry.

KATHY DRUCE - ELECTRICAL TRADES HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

CIT's Electrical Trades Head of Department Kathy Druce believes that women can find opportunities and success, even in male-dominated industries. "I hate hearing that



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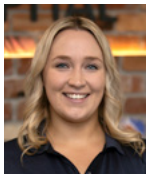


The Women in Trades Grants Program is an ACT Government initiative, funded by the ACT and Australian Governments.

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CAPITAL VENEERING

— promoting happiness, progression and goal achievement for all team members



by Taylor Perrin

Commercial Project Manager and Estimator, Capital Veneering & 2018 CPB Tradesperson Scholarship Winner (NSW)



A lot has changed in the 21 years that Capital Veneering has been operating in Canberra, Queanbeyan and surrounding areas. Once a small, two-man joinery shop, Capital Veneering is now a thriving 65+ person company running large-scale high-rise apartment joinery packages and Government fitouts as well as high-end residential joinery projects.

Capital Veneering prides itself on its emphasis on community, high quality, passionate people, integrity and innovation in all levels of the business. It offers its staff opportunities to work in commercial and residential joinery fabrication and installation, CNC machining and programming, pre-production detailing, project management, estimating, contracts administration, accounting, training, administration, team leading and management.

Among the encouraging changes over the years at Capital Veneering, has been its fast growing, female influence in the company. With currently three apprentices at varying levels of their trade, one pre-production detailer, three office administration/accounts staff and one qualified tradeswoman in a project management/estimating role, Capital Veneering is proactive and passionate about supporting the women in the business to develop their skills and be their best in the thriving industry.

Through initiatives such as personal development and self-management training with outside companies, a company-wide social club with monthly events, fundraising campaigns, a yearly weekend trip away with families and partners, internal mentoring programs, dedicated training plans and regular two-way feedback sessions, all members of the Capital Veneering team are actively shown that their personal happiness, progression and goal achievement is important to their peers and leaders.

Jade is 18 years old and is a Second Year Apprentice at Capital Veneering. She decided to begin a career in joinery after deciding she wanted to follow a path that was unique and hands-on. She was nervous when she

first came for her interview at Capital Veneering and was concerned about how she would be treated, but quickly realised that everyone was eager to help her feel welcome and a part of the team.

Jade is now confidently building joinery by herself, attends Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) with five other young women in her class and is beginning to learn how much detailed work goes into kitchens, bathrooms and other joinery. She is thankful for the support she is getting from not only her team leaders and management, but also the other females at Capital Veneering through mentoring.

Chantal is the trusted Finance and HR Manager at Capital Veneering. Her role at Capital Veneering is one that puts her at the heart of the company and over the last seven years she has worked at Capital Veneering she has become a crucial member of the team. Chantal brought 20+ years' experience in business and finance to her role when she started at Capital Veneering. In her time with the company, she has introduced both financial and HR management processes that have allowed and assisted Capital Veneering to continue their growth trajectory.

In my own case, Capital Veneering has been an important support network for me throughout my career thus far. I started at Capital Veneering in 2015 as a Second Year Apprentice with a lack of self-confidence in my trade skills from a prior company. The completely male management team took the time to address my concerns, focus on areas where I wanted to improve, support me through my education and helped build me into a solid tradeswoman when I was signed off in 2017.

When I received my trade certificate, the support did not stop there. Capital Veneering's encouraging directors Ben Madden and James Saffery built me up through team leader opportunities on the workshop floor before moving me into a commercial project management and estimating role in the office. Through the constant education and skill building challenges I was given to work through, I was awarded



Jade



Taylor

“My career has been an adventure and I highly respect the team at Capital Veneering for consistently supporting me, teaching me, listening to me, challenging me and showing me that a career in construction is a fantastic pathway for any woman.”

the NAWIC CPB Tradeswoman Scholarship (NSW) in 2018 and am forever grateful to NAWIC for the opportunities that have come since being awarded this.

My career has been an adventure and I highly respect the team at Capital Veneering for consistently supporting me, teaching me, listening to me, challenging me and showing me that a career in construction is a fantastic pathway for any woman. I have enjoyed the self-confidence and pride that has come with learning to build joinery with my own two

hands and the self-organisation and leadership skills that have come from learning to run teams and planning ahead for large scale joinery works on the workshop floor. In addition, I have developed computer, estimating and project management skills and I've run meetings with builders and clients.

I would have never imagined when I began my apprenticeship in 2013 that so many different opportunities and pathways would open up to me in this world over the next nine years. I am thankful for it all and excited for the future. I hope more women get to experience the same journey as they begin their careers in this ever-growing, ever-evolving and exciting industry. **■**

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"Our motto is 'innovation in joinery'. We want to be at the forefront in software and machinery, as well as people and processes. We've invested heavily in our people, software, and state of the art CNC machinery and automated board handling systems." - Ben Madden, Director

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THE SEVEN THINGS I WISH I KNEW WHEN RETURNING TO WORK FROM PARENTAL LEAVE



by Rachael de Zylva

Community and Stakeholder
Engagement Lead, Laing O'Rourke
& NAWIC Member

Back in September 2019 when I started my year of parental leave before the arrival of my daughter, I honestly thought the 12 months away from work would stretch out forever! I imagined warm sunny days strolling in the park, sleeping when she slept and being uber organised and ready to return to the office – fresh, renewed, a different but better version of myself.

I now laugh out loud how completely crazy those ideas were. Returning to work was not what I expected. I had changed, things at work had changed and everything was now different.

So, with that in mind, I thought it was worth sharing what I wish I knew in case you are considering having children, adopting, fostering, trying, or about to have a baby.

1. DAYCARE IS A CESSPIT OF GERMS

There I said it. No matter what you do, your baby will get sick and you will have to take time off to deal with it. This is particularly during the first 12 months of daycare when it feels like your whole house is experiencing the black plague. Baby gets a cold, you get a cold, your partner gets the cold, everyone is sick. Baby gets conjunctivitis and suddenly you all have the dreaded pink eye.

Naturally the timing is terrible as you put them into daycare just as you return to work. So, if you can afford it, get your child into daycare a few weeks before you return to work so they are adjusted and settled. That way, you've already dealt with a few daycare bugs upfront.

Ultimately, there is no way of getting around this

one – you just have to live through it as best you can. Slowly but surely, your baby will build some resilience. If you can work flexibly, this helps a lot at managing the endless illnesses that will come.

2. BABIES DON'T ALWAYS FIT IN WITH YOUR PLANS

Some days, no matter how hard you try, things will not go to plan. And you know what? That's ok. Some days you have to squeeze in work where you can and maybe log in after dinner to catch up after you've dealt with the vomit and poo explosions.

It can be particularly hard trying to fit everything into the day. My best advice is to know what your work priorities are and stick to them. Don't do any other work that does not help you to meet those core priorities. An honest conversation with your manager also helps if you are struggling and this may take away some of the stress.

3. GUILT

Ah the guilt. When you are at work you will feel guilty for not being with your baby. When you are with the baby you will feel guilty about not being at work. It is a losing battle. I feel guilty for finishing work at 5pm, I feel guilty for feeling sleep deprived, I even feel guilty sometimes for returning to work and being a working parent.

There is nothing else you can do except actively try to get rid of the guilt. Ask any other working parent, everyone has it. Accept that you are doing your best at managing your family, your work, your boss and yourself. Sometimes each of these areas just have to give a little. If you are doing your best, no one can expect more.



Rachael de Zylva onsite at Central Station, Sydney

In addition to her role as a senior community and stakeholder engagement lead at Laing O'Rourke, Rachael de Zylva is mum to Josephine, a rambunctious toddler. Rachael is passionate about making the workforce more diverse and empowering women in construction.

4. THIS TOO SHALL PASS

Even on the toughest days when your bub has a stream of snot running from her nose and you are trying to do MS Teams meetings at the same time (yes, I've been there), things will get better and easier. It's even harder if you have older children hanging off you. This too shall pass. Everything is merely a moment in time.

5. ACCEPT YOU WILL BE WORKING AT A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT PACE

Any notion that you have that you will be returning to work and powering through your day like you used to, needs to be left behind. Everything is now different especially if you are tired due to a baby who will not sleep at night, has reflux, is teething or a combination of all three.

Try to let go of your assumptions and expectations. Your priorities have changed and work is just one priority that now needs to fit in with everything else. On the plus side though, going to work means you can go get a coffee whenever you want to and participate in adult conversations all day long.

6. HAVE CLEAR BOUNDARIES AROUND YOUR WORK AND YOUR HOME

Boundaries are all about finding the flexibility that works for you, your job and your team or manager.

This is one area that you may have to learn upon your return to work. What level of flexibility are you willing to give? What is appropriate for your role and what you do? For example, if there is something really big and important coming up at work, are you willing and can you put in some extra hours? Perhaps you can take some time in lieu afterwards?


If you return part-time, will you take work calls on the days you are parenting? What are your boundaries and how will you communicate them to your manager and your colleagues?

The quicker you can set clear boundaries and let others know what they are, the easier it will be. For me, I now have a personal mobile phone and a work phone which helps establish very clear parameters.

7. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORK A MILLION HOURS TO BE EFFECTIVE

Maybe before you had children you would work long hours and were able to take ages to draft the perfect presentation. Post children, you are suddenly a multi-tasking wizard able to drink half cold tea, while wiping a bottom and sending a text message.

After returning to work from parental leave, I realised I could no longer work long hours as there is a little person at home who also needs my attention. So, I focused on being efficient and working more effectively and delivering what I needed to in the time I had.

Change is difficult at the best of times. Good luck on your parenthood journey and please be kind to yourself as you go through this transition. Finally, before I go, if you are thinking about who to work for during this journey, Laing O'Rourke's paid parental leave is industry-leading. Come and join us! 

CHANCE CREATES ADVENTUROUS CAREER DETOUR



by Helen Shield

Communications Contractor,
Construction Training Fund

Construction Training Fund CEO and NAWIC member, Tiffany Allen, is driven by a love of family, sport, adventure and the outdoors, an unshakeable work ethic and a commitment to building robust, positive connections.

Her career started early, selling lollies at 10 to raise money for charity, progressing to fast food chain Hungry Jacks and a serious flirtation with the Royal Australian Air Force, where she was hoping to learn more about information technology.

But a chance meeting became a major career detour.

Tiffany was queuing at the post office to collect her passport before heading off for basic training. She was unhappy about an implied threat that despite passing the hurdles set, her weight, or lack of it, could derail her progression to the next stage.

The Australia Post delivery centre manager, who was just about to start a recruitment drive, noticed her in the line cradling her motorcycle helmet, invited her for a next-day interview and snapped her up.

Tiffany worked as a postie for three years but ended up having a 14-year career with Australia Post that included delivery, administration, redirections and parcels, sales, marketing, product development, project management and account management.

From there she worked on identity verification, taking charge of police checks when they were transferred from WA Police to Australia Post, supported the project team that built the Working with Children Check Card and then moved on to the Country Age Pension Fuel Card, a key project of then Regional Development Minister Brendon Grylls.

Regional Development later

seconded Tiffany to implement and manage the Pilbara Revitalisation Plan in the newly formed Department of Regional Development and Lands and then on Royalties for Regions.

She was seconded to the Housing Authority in 2013 becoming Director of Business Development and then Land and Housing Construction in 2018, with responsibility for the delivery of all departmental construction and development projects.

She then led the development of the next 10-year WA Housing Strategy and was appointed Executive Director of Housing and Homelessness, before her August 2020 appointment as CEO of the Construction Training Fund.

Asked about what it takes to succeed in a male-dominated industry like construction, Tiffany says it's important for leaders to hold to solid values, hard work and good ethics.

"Don't be afraid to give something a go," she said. "Even though I went to all girls' school, St Mary's (Anglican Girls' School), my brother was at Hale (School, an exclusive Anglican school for boys), so I hung out with the boys. I'm a tomboy. At Australia Post I was one of the only female posties among 40 men and I didn't really think much of it."

"There are some great men out there, you need to find the right people to align yourself with."

Asked what advice she would dispense to aspiring women



Tiffany Allen in CTF's Construction Futures Centre, which is an interactive, hands-on Scitech for the construction industry. The Construction Futures Centre is rich with information about the different construction jobs on offer



Tiffany Allen with Skillhire Trainees

Tiffany Allen encourages women in construction to accept the challenge and surround themselves with a circle of advocates.

leaders in male-dominated industry she said: "Don't limit yourself." Tiffany contends good leaders have breadth, a good grasp of their subject area and depth. That is, they know themselves, hold true to their values and maintain a capacity for self-reflection. She supports the idea that leaders, particularly women, need a circle of advocates.

Knowing who you are and finding the strength in that, goes a long way, she says. Being arrogant or trying to be someone you are not, does not get you very far.

Tiffany, a softball enthusiast and a leader and promoter of women in business, is committed to building capability and capacity by

developing great people. She thrives on connecting people who can work together to help each other achieve professional and organisational goals.

Professionally, Tiffany is focused on steering the Construction Training Fund into a new era of thought leadership, improving accessibility and service and ensuring WA's construction industry has a diverse, job-ready, skilled workforce. ■



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DESIGN MANAGER CASSANDRA ZUGHBI REFLECTS ON HER EVOLVING CAREER



by Clare Bailey

Head of Marketing, Taylor
& NAWIC Member

Recognised for her clear and concise style, Cassandra Zughbi's design work is a balance of creativity and practicality. A Design Manager at Taylor, Cassandra places emphasis on building strong, collaborative relationships as the key to delivering exceptional and effective design solutions for clients.

With more than 12 years' experience in the field, Cassandra has played a pivotal role in award-winning builds like the Rosehill Racecourse refurbishment, the construction and fitout of the eco-luxury Wildlife Retreat at Taronga and Lindfield Learning Village Stage 1 - a school constructed to deliver a highly innovative educational model that sees students advance according to their rate of progress rather than age. Cassandra is currently Design Manager on the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall Renewal program.

BUILDING A CAREER IN DESIGN

Cassandra grew up in Bathurst and moved to the city to study an Advanced Diploma of Interior Design at Enmore Design Centre. Eight years in interior design followed, including roles in design and construction with Westfield/Scentre Group and design of the Northlakes Westfield Ikea mall extension and entertainment precinct. Another five years saw Cassandra focus on hospitality interior design and construction, as a Senior Interior Designer and Project Leader for Altis Architecture. During this time, Cassandra led and coordinated interior projects with design, construction, documentation and engineering teams.

Cassandra worked on significant improvements to the Rosehill Gardens Racecourse's events spaces, audio visual experience, amenities and food and beverage facilities. Having consulted closely with the

Taylor team on the Rosehill refurbishment General Manager, Ben Folkard, then brought Cassandra on board. Joining after the birth of her first child, the multi award-winning Wildlife Retreat at Taronga was Cassandra's first job with Taylor.

The Wildlife Retreat at Taronga wraps around its own private native wildlife sanctuary within the iconic Sydney zoo. Guests are treated to the ultimate, immersive overnight conservation experience with multiple exclusive guided tours, close-up wildlife encounters, dining opportunities and first-class views of Sydney Harbour. The Retreat is a complex hospitality build, undertaken in a live zoo environment. Add to that delivery of CLT and other construction innovations, animal habitats, heritage aspects and unique WSHE complexities, the construction team had to manage many moving parts. That's where the value of Cassandra's role in design management came to the fore.

On the build, one area of focus for Cassandra was reviewing balustrades, access and amenities for non-compliance, prior to build. She worked with the architect to expedite pre-build changes that, essentially, deliver extensive savings for clients by removing the risk of costly 'redos'. Assessing all design elements pre-build also protects the project timeline. Cassandra assessed on site water-pooling, undertaking a landscape levels review to reconfigure drainage and grates within the habitat spaces.

Cassandra has seen her role in design management evolve to address the overlap between architecture and construction. Taylor Project Manager, Adam Vassallo, said, "Cassandra's input is fundamental to the success of her projects and to the exceptional outcomes we achieved at Taronga."



Wildlife Retreat at Taronga Zoo

After the Taronga project, Cassandra worked on Lindfield Learning Village, Stage 1, awarded an MBA Excellence in Construction award for Adaptive Re-use.

The project spans a series of 13 classrooms, workspaces, woodwork and science rooms, canteen, student assembly areas, administration offices and kitchens. Outdoor play areas are constructed in the central courtyard and around the perimeter of the school. A new 30m pool has selected concourse finishes, wall finishes and ceiling finishes and a central Performance Theatre Auditorium is a special Village feature.

To ensure works were completed before the students returned to school in the new year, the project team successfully compressed a seven-month program in to five months.

Three years at Taylor, and two babies later, the move has proved incredibly rewarding for Cassandra, "Construction is the area of design I most enjoy. Complex builds today require continuous assessment and improvement. And the design manager, effectively, becomes the bridge between the architect and the builder."

When asked about other important aspects of design management in construction, Cassandra notes, "Complex interior joinery is another important aspect on builds as it is often the interior details that are most noticed by the end user. The design manager reviews every interior detail and junction to ensure the architect's vision can be built for purpose. All general building elements also require careful compliance reviews." Cassandra and the project team resolve all design elements, these may include highly complex floor set outs, services collisions, longevity and durability upgrades, coordinating internal feature elements, joinery, door specifications, fire engineering details, SiD items and more.

FACING CHALLENGES IN THE WORKPLACE

When asked about the challenges she has faced in the industry as a woman, Cassandra becomes reflective and discusses her wish for women to support each other more, "I was missing positive support from other females as a young graduate. Surprisingly, in

some of my previous places of employment, I often found men more supportive than women. In one group, it took a strong female manager to join our team and change the culture to something more positive. I was very grateful for her positive leadership and I try to emulate it for others."

Cassandra also found judgements on her appearance challenging. Petite in stature, her knowledge, age and experience could be overlooked, "People often thought I was about five or eight years younger than I was. I overcame this with time and I changed my appearance through wearing heels and more expensive clothing to increase my self-confidence until my self-worth was recognised by others."

Cassandra observes that, although it shouldn't be so, people sometimes need to get to know you and understand your experience and knowledge, and what you can bring to the table, before they allow space for you professionally. "It is challenging to put yourself out there and positive reinforcement from a female mentor was incredibly helpful when it came to pushing myself forward." Cassandra is now, in turn, a mentor for younger graduates at Taylor.



"Positive reinforcement from a female mentor was incredibly helpful when it came to pushing myself forward."

Cassandra Zughbi

we celebrate women

Cassandra believes companies need to be proactive when it comes to supporting women in our industry. Working three days a week, Cassandra considers juggling flexible arrangements with motherhood another challenge – one familiar to many.

“Motherhood is so rewarding, it is an achievement! And, as a working mother, I find that the collaborative and family-oriented culture at Taylor is so important when it comes to feeling supported in my design management role.”

THE REWARDS OF WORKING IN CONSTRUCTION

“I just love seeing our jobs come to life and seeing results quickly. Predominantly, we work in live environments like schools, hospitality, high traffic CBD commercial spaces, racetracks and the zoo. They are complex and challenging, with unique aspects to every build.” Opportunities to work in different

environments keep things interesting whether it's onsite, head office, equine or zoo habitats, walking through a construction site or working from home.

“Working as a team, everyone on a Taylor project has their own important role to play – client, project manager, architect, partners, our fantastic subcontractors and our own teams. Construction is a very collaborative process and we are always looking for ways to be innovative, to save time and money and to create value for our clients.”

For Cassandra, helping people resolve problems or issues, sometimes even before people know there are issues, is a highlight of design management. “Good design is about problem-solving. You need to combine listening skills, empathy and creativity to do your best work. Being a mum and getting to do what I love – there's nothing better than that.” ■



Lindfield Learning Village

we are bold + brave

Kate Lorkin,
Plant Operator, Delcon Civil

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PASSING ON THE CONFIDENCE BATON

— *the importance of women claiming
professional recognition*



by Melonie Bayl-Smith LFRAIA MAICD

Nominated Architect ARB 6846 ARBV 19214
Director, Bijl Architecture and Associate Professor, UNSW FADA School of Architecture
& 2010 NAWIC IWD Scholarship Winner



Several years ago, I was anointed a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects, my other professional member association. This gave me the privilege of adding an 'F' to my previously held post-nominal, RAIA (no rude jokes, thanks).

But to say I was 'anointed' misses the mark because I certainly wasn't hand-selected for this post-nominal upgrade. Nobody called me up and said, "Hey Mel, we're going to elevate you to Fellow, howdya like that?"

Rather, I self-nominated. I garnered signatures of support from several colleagues, completed the two-page application, gave my CV a quick spit-polish and emailed the documents across the Harbour Bridge to the Institute's NSW Chapter office. However, while it didn't take a great deal of effort to assemble the application, entering this undertaking did ask me to ignore my self-doubts and just Get It Done.

Intriguingly, my elevation to Fellow didn't always result in the glowing responses I had perhaps naively expected from my friends and contemporaries. In fact, the addition of that little ole 'F' prompted some quite provocative conversations with others working in architecture. Congratulatory words were often swiftly followed with "why did you bother?" (read: it's not a worthy accomplishment), "it won't make a difference, the Institute is still a boys' club" (read: your accomplishment will be ineffective) or "you're an overachiever, so of course they would make *you* a Fellow" (ouch!).

CUTTING DOWN THE TALL POPPY

That last comment is not particularly surprising. Like Rebel Wilson¹, I became acquainted with the Tall Poppy Syndrome early in life. Other kids at my primary school learned that they could quickly diminish my

academic and musical achievements with a snarky and persistent critique of my bigger-boned physique. And thinking back over all of my school years, I've realised that the smart, high-achieving girls were far, far more likely to attract bullying and criticism than the smart, high-achieving boys.

In case you were wondering, while this reflection on my personal observations appear to be unscientific, they in fact do have some substance. In a recent academic study, Maureen O'Neill and Angie Calder found that high performing adolescent female athletes are very likely to be bullied for their successes by their peers, whilst similarly performing male athletes are likely to never be bullied for their sporting achievements.²

So, if a sport-mad country like Australia has an appetite for taking down those female achievers who participate in its overwhelmingly favourite pastime, then really what hope have we got? And given this underlying cultural hostility to the achievements of women, why did I apply to be made a Fellow?

A TITLE AWARDED FOR CONTRIBUTIONS BEYOND ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE

There were several reasons. Firstly, elevation to Fellow is open to member practitioners who have demonstrated leadership and made meaningful contributions in diverse ways, not just within traditional practice modes. It enables a broad range of activities related to the architectural profession – volunteering, advocacy, teaching, governance, mentoring, examining, peer review, writing, research – to be acknowledged under the banner of a clear and knowable title.

This title, and others like it, isn't reserved for overachievers either. The focus of such recognition

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/18/rebel-wilson-australia-tall-poppy-syndrome-media>

2. <https://theconversation.com/cutting-down-the-tall-poppies-female-athletes-bullied-in-aussie-schools-44223>

My practice Bijl Architecture funded and built our Street Art for Two Good installation, highlighting gender equality issues. Artist: Ox King

must be on worthy contributions, no matter how specific or broad the activities. Unlike one-off awards given to the polished, finished product that is the completed architectural project, the title of Fellow bestows an enduring recognition of one's professional achievements and contributions. This is regardless of whether they are collaborative or singular, short or long term, unfinished and ongoing, messy or beautifully resolved. Such lasting recognition reinforces what one brings to the conversation is worth listening to and listening to more than once.



Photography: POMT

I know being called a Fellow is a bit dated and Masonic - to be honest, part of me secretly hoped that my Fellowship certificate would be accompanied by a Druid's cloak (in matte black, of course). But to be brutally honest, the architectural profession, and indeed all key players in the built environment, have many more pressing issues to deal with than finding a replacement for the old Fellow title. Let's of course start with the retention and amplification of women's involvement in the construction industry³. Ultimately, we need people and resources to focus on the biggest challenges facing the industry. In reflecting upon the submissions received for the NAWIC International Women's Day scholarship, retention and advancement of women in the construction sector continues to be very much front of mind.

Secondly, if there's an opportunity to lay claim to some rightfully earned recognition that is visible and broadly understood by the wider community, then I think this recognition is worth the time taken to fill out an application form and contact a few colleagues for support. Why not be recognised for my time spent volunteering on Institute committees, serving as a registration examiner, writing articles, giving talks and contributing to more than a decade of design studio tutoring? Why not signal to my clients, employees, consultants, builders, colleagues and the general public that I have made some worthy contributions to my profession over the past twenty years?

WOMEN CONTINUE TO DOWNPLAY THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS

The ongoing and rather frustrating challenge is the age-old problem that women continue to undersell and undervalue their achievements. As a result, throughout both my profession and indeed the broader construction industry, the opportunity for recognition and respect within and outside of it is lost, delayed or under-realised. At this juncture, it is

"If I am willing to lead and encourage others through mentoring, teaching or volunteering then surely, I should also show leadership by being willing to be visibly recognised for these actions."

heartening to reflect on the commitment and effort that NAWIC has made in establishing its awards and scholarship programs and that women are actively encouraged and supported in making their submissions. Positive action brings positive outcomes.

The flip side of all of this, and the way I see it, is that if I am willing to lead and encourage others through mentoring, teaching or volunteering then surely, I should also show leadership by being willing to be visibly recognised for these actions, even if doing so comes with a slice of social friction.

Looking back, the friction has been worth it. In late in 2020 I received an email from the National Office of the Institute, saying that Chapter Council had nominated me to be made a Life Fellow. This could never have happened without nominating myself for Fellow in the first place. For that, I must thank two of my (slightly older) colleagues and friends who, completely independently of each other, convinced me to stop undervaluing myself and to complete my application without delay.

With this legacy in mind, the very least I can do is pass that confidence baton on. **n**



Where the dream began - the author in her architect uncle's studio, circa 1985

Photography: Louis Bayl



3. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319966286_Challenges_success_factors_and_strategies_for_women's_career_development_in_the_Australian_construction_industry - Rosa, J., Hon, C., Xia, B., Lamari, F, 2017

we are *bold + brave*

WORK HARD, DREAM BIG

— they're the next generation

Ella with AITC CEO
Mark Hands at the
Gold Coast campus



by Eliza Lane

Head of Industry Education,
Australian Industry Trade College

The construction industry still leans towards the Y chromosome, with women only making up 2% of the Australian trades workforce¹. However, many organisations are challenging this norm and are committed to improving the achievement rate of young women within the industry.

Traditional, male-dominated industries are becoming a thing of the past. The future is about opportunity and skillsets, not about gender or historical 'norms'; and it's the next generation who are unabated in their pursuit of equality.

The next generation of young women at the Australian Industry Trade College (AITC) are fearless and empowered and they are rewarded for their hard work and initiative with successful outcomes in a diverse range of industries. The independent senior school's purpose is to educate tomorrow's leaders, where leadership is defined by values, character and a commitment to their chosen profession, not by gender.

University is not the only pathway to success. Building the future of industry begins with celebrating, promoting and encouraging young people to consider a career in construction in high school. The AITC has been removing barriers, building awareness and elevating industry careers for the past 12 years. Two AITC young women who are not only dreaming but also creating their own futures in the construction industry are Alisha Di Ruggiero and Ella O'Shannessy.

ALISHA DI RUGGIERO - APPRENTICE ELECTRICIAN

Currently in Year 12, Alisha Di Ruggiero was the first young person, male or female, from the Toowoomba campus to be signed to an apprenticeship. Alisha joined the AITC in Year 10 and is now completing her senior schooling while in a school-based electrical apprenticeship with Switch It Electrical.

"My electrical apprenticeship is everything I could have wanted in a job. I chose this career because it was a good fit for me and my personality. I didn't want to end up in an office block, unhappy in my profession and stuck," explains Alisha.

Her supervisor from Switch It Electrical, Kris Lobwein agrees and sees Alisha as an investment in the future of his business: "Alisha is a great apprentice and a pleasure to work with. We are very happy that she is working for our company and she will be an incredible asset going forward."

Her work ethic is simple, "I work to the best of my ability at all times, always challenging myself to be better day-to-day in my home, school and work life. This works for me. My job as an apprentice electrician provides for future development and is very fulfilling."

Alisha on
campus at
the AITC
Toowoomba
campus



1. www.tradeswomenaustralia.com.au

ELLA O'SHANNESSY - APPRENTICE BRICKLAYER

From the Darling Downs to the Gold Coast, Ella O'Shannessy is another young woman making waves in the construction industry.

Within weeks of starting at the AITC, Ella attended a Trade Taster at TAFE and explored career options she had never considered. Bricklaying appealed to Ella and she was quickly linked to her current employer, Lyle Banks, from Banksy Brick and Block, who has a reputation as a great tradesman and someone able to nurture the right apprentice to achieve their best.

But it was Ella's ability to quickly learn on the job that gave her a head start, going from work experience to apprentice in a few short weeks. Lyle's feedback says it all: "Ella is amazing. I couldn't fault her. Her attitude was the thing that most impressed me! I just have to show her once—most kids you have to tell constantly. Ella has been incredible."

Her enthusiasm convinced the employer that he wouldn't find a better apprentice, and she was signed up in early December while in Year 10.


Initially, Ella faced some push back on her decision to pursue bricklaying, fuelled by people's misconceptions about traditional trades and gender stereotypes. "A lot of people came to me and said, 'You can't do that because you're a girl.' It was a big challenge. However, I've proved them wrong. I've overcome these hurdles and I've succeeded."

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE TRADESWOMEN

As Alisha and Ella continue their school-based apprenticeships in construction, it is poignant to note these young women have paved the way for other tradeswomen to follow in their footsteps, to one day work with industry giants.

Now in her last year of high school, Alisha is mentoring others. "I have been able to guide other future tradeswomen into work experience and work placements due to my experience."

Ella has also become an inspirational mentor to her peers, recently speaking with Year 10 students at the AITC Gold Coast campus about her journey in construction thus far. "Being a female in the industry, it's quite a big thing," explains Ella. "To get where I am today it's been a hard struggle but it's worth it. I like to be in a position to tell people not to give up on what they're going for."

As an educational institution, the Australian Industry Trade College is steadfast in building up young tradeswomen as future industry leaders. It is everyone's role to ensure opportunities arise for the next generation of women in industry, with apprenticeships and traineeships, at interview or during toolbox talks. 

Every good employer understands the importance of investing in their workforce

Grow your own with an AITC apprentice



AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY
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THE ABILITY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT TO CONQUER ADVERSITY

- *my Kokoda experience*



by Emma Foster

Project Engineer, SHAPE Australia
& NAWIC Member

In 2017, I had the rare opportunity to take on the then greatest physical challenge of my life - fulfilling No.2 of my two decade old bucket list and walking the Kokoda Track.

I knew walking the Kokoda Track would be physical. I knew it was located in a developing country and it would be a great chance to boost my knowledge of Australian history. I wasn't wrong, but I was blissfully ignorant of the unexpected learnings which would make the experience entirely unforgettable.

I am a relatively fit person. I've run half marathons, played most sports competitively and regularly hit the gym. So, I held minimal fear with regard to my physical ability.

Leading up to the adventure, training became my everything. For the first time in years, I was putting myself first. I had been pushing to build networks at my relatively new job, I battled repeating illnesses, I was finding my own ground after a relationship breakdown and I was building a new side project of a professional networking organisation. All of that noise dissipated though as physical training became my true priority. I thought it was the only thing that could prepare me.

The day finally came where I was packing my bursting bag to fly north, where I would meet courageous people who were to become my family for the next ten days. The airport arrival was the moment of truth. Whilst looking at the mountain of boxed necessities to carry along the trail, it seemed apparent to the growing group of red-shirted trekkers that the only things we may have had in common is our construction industry backgrounds and the shared nervous laughter.

DAY 1 ON THE TRACK

Or, as I like to refer to it, hell.

This was categorically my toughest day. It started off with a small and exciting flight to Poppendetta then a four-hour truck ride to Kokoda proper. Upon arrival, we got a glimpse into what the Track's terrain was really like. The 37-degree heat was beating down on us and we paid our first of many respects to those who had lost their lives whilst facing Japanese soldiers.

Before we set off, trekkers were paired with their local porters and it was here I learnt that just three of us had opted to hike sans porter. As the only female to make this choice, I was sticking to my guns and I was going to carry my 15kg for the whole 96km ahead. From my perspective, there was no other way I could experience a glimpse of what our diggers had achieved 80 years prior.



Two hours into Day 1, I was almost fainting and genuinely terrified of slowing the group for the next eight days. Here I was, fit, young, competitive and stubborn and it was then this terror transformed into my first enlightenment on mateship.

My day buddy refused to leave my side and slowed with me while everyone else rightly powered ahead. Then, in undeniably aspirational leadership, our trek leader pushed me to the front to lead the way. To this day I struggle to describe what that moment meant to me. Still suffering from the extremely humid heat, the 15kg on my back and the sheer shock of the day, all 40 trekkers and porters cheered me on as I stumbled to get my breath.

Two hours later we reached camp and the relief was palpable. The mental challenge was also now in full swing.



EACH DAY ON THE TRACK ENCOMPASSED A POETIC ROUTINE ALONGSIDE THE CONSTANTLY CHANGING TERRAIN.

This enabled us to always be working towards something. The sense of structure really highlighted the need for small goals in any life journey - foreseeable gratification can be a huge motivator.

Also, as a small gesture to remind ourselves of not only what our diggers went through but also the mental health struggles of those specifically in our construction industry, we would start with a reading. These reflecting moments of silence were powerful and rang home the real reason why all of us were on the track.

Hiking shifts varied, although they often tipped towards 11 hours of true endurance. Putting one foot in front of the other was tough and cumbersome.

A necessary aspect of the day was the distraction of wonderfully diverse conversations. "Which is better on a Bunnings Sausage - BBQ or Tomato Sauce?" Or, on an arguably more serious topic, "what are your thoughts on the [then] upcoming marriage equality vote?"

I relished these discussions every day and it was these moments that truly signified what being a part of a team is really about. There will always be people you don't agree with, people you want to stay close to and those you highly respect (as well as the pot-stirrers). Every single one of us was working towards the same goal: getting to Owers' Corner, ideally as soon and as pain free as possible.

At 85% humidity, the terrain was mostly clay sludge with falls, spills and face-plants becoming inevitable. Typically, the uphill days were a favourite and the days we spent going downhill were met with dread. Many of the slopes we tackled would descend dramatically - seeing us using all four limbs to slowly brace ourselves down. Every day also included the chase for a creek swim to shower and get off our feet, no matter how icy cold some water temperatures were.

In the evenings and around a fire, we shared stories of our lives, sang songs and befriended our new Papua New Guinea local mates whilst humbly recounting each moment on the track worth cherishing.

THE FINAL MORNING HAD US WAKING IN DISBELIEF

Knowing we had only a 45 minute stroll to the finish line was both exhilarating and awe inspiring. With the Aussie and PNG flags in hand, we marched up as a truly unified team to the holy grail; through those Owers' Corner arches.

Nothing could have possibly wiped the smile off my face crossing that finish line. But once it settled in, my eventual response to finishing the 96km Kokoda Track was raw.

SO. MANY. TEARS.

There is no real explanation as to why. I have always been convinced that my tear ducts have essentially dried up. But here, the floodgates opened and I could do nothing but wail into our trek leader's shoulder. The emotion of not only the previous eight days but also the impact that this entire journey had had on my new life's chapter was unbelievably gratifying.

Ultimately, the trek expended every last ounce of physical energy I had. It was the mental challenge that truly shook me though and, at the risk of sounding melodramatic, it changed my perspective on determination for life. It also redefined my views on teamwork.

To this day, I am still perplexed as to how our diggers not only battled for months against the Japanese soldiers in 1942 but also won the war through a fighting withdrawal and in extremely unforgiving terrain.

Kokoda: Simply incomprehensible. Forever grateful. 🇵🇵

DISCOVERING THE POWER OF FEMALE COMMUNITY



by Sher Mitchell

Archaeologist and Company Director,
Advance Archaeology Pty Ltd
& NAWIC Member

I'm an Archaeologist and the Company Director at Advance Archaeology Pty Ltd, which I established in 2017. My consultancy, based in Queensland, specialises in working with Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage. We also offer a variety of drone services. As a female-led consultancy, I employ a staff of three people, with a multidisciplinary and diverse skill set.

We're engaged when development requires ground disturbance, at which point we assess the potential risks and impact to cultural heritage. Guided by various legislative requirements, both State and Commonwealth, we attribute risk allocations and ongoing advice which is provided to the proponent to assist in guiding the design, development and construction methodology of a project. My consultancy services a variety of different proponents with different interests including Local and State Government agencies, Native Title Groups, Registered Aboriginal Parties, Developers and various private industries.

Archaeology in Australia has a large female contingent but female-owned and operated consultancies are uncommon. I am however, fortunate to have several women who have inspired me to build a business in an industry that is highly charged, both emotionally and politically. Being a female business owner in a largely male-dominated industry gives me the opportunity to build strong relationships with the women I work with. It also allows me to contribute to the equality of women in construction.



Archaeology in Australia differs from the rest of the world in that we are working with a living, thriving and evolving cultural landscape where communication and collaboration to mitigate risks is crucial to the success of a project. Where many countries excavate to further our knowledge and contribute to the archaeological record, we aim to avoid disturbance of cultural heritage first and foremost, then look to alternative strategies where avoidance is not possible.

In an advisory capacity, I feel I have a great responsibility to ensure projects are compliant and

that all stakeholders are provided the opportunity to speak and provide insight that may impact the outcome of the project works. The cultural heritage and archaeological industry in Australia is sometimes difficult to navigate and requires a strong, ethical approach to managing the risks of construction projects, particularly where it relates to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

It's a great time to be a woman in business. Freedom of expression, as well as the mindset and actions of our gender across the world, mean we are bursting with ideas and we are standing up, speaking out and taking our rightful places at any table. Over the past five to ten years I've witnessed a marked shift in the paradigm, where women are using their voices to diversify traditional male-dominated spaces within business. Nothing more is true for the construction industry where women are leading in many fields including management, engineering, design and fieldwork.

I feel that the structure of our society can make women feel separated and insular, where life can be largely nuclear; all while still maintaining the responsibilities, judgements and blessings of being a woman. In times past the support of women was intergenerational and based in community to inspire and encourage individual potential.

Today, we also live in a time where advertising, media and our daily lives pit women against each other, judging how we look, dress, eat, work, how we express ourselves and how we are as workers, wives and mothers. I'm at the stage of my life where I'm building a successful business within a traditionally male-dominated field, while raising a family and undertaking things that fill my cup. Pursuing these things, whilst also being closer to nature and building a community of women who support and lift each other up, is very important to me.

I am surrounded by the most dedicated, educated, strong and capable women I've ever worked with and I believe that in Australia, women have a natural resilience and determination to succeed in their own right. A crucial decision I made when establishing my consultancy was to encourage and support all the women I am fortunate to work with and to always lift them up in the hope it will become infectious. Nearly four years on, I am surrounded a small, but strong, alliance of women within the construction industry that rely on and

"I am surrounded a small, but strong, alliance of women within the construction industry that rely on and encourage each other to be their absolute best, no matter the challenge or obstacle."

encourage each other to be their absolute best, no matter the challenge or obstacle.

When I entered the workforce in the mid 1990s I was subjected to misogyny, intimidation and harassment from several employers. But I was fortunate to have been provided the right support to move past these occurrences. Many women have not been so lucky.

As a woman, I hope that we will not always have to stand up against misogyny and inequality. However, my experience within the construction industry, particularly within the last few years has been one of acceptance and support where we are a team and my gender is not a point of discussion, nor a limitation.

The Australian construction industry, considering the scale of works and diversity of roles and people required to undertake a project, has a fantastic opportunity to make a considerable impact on how women are perceived, supported and lifted in this space. I believe it will set the tone for the future.

I am proud to be a member of NAWIC and honoured to have been selected to contribute my thoughts and experiences as a woman and business owner in the construction industry. ■



BUILDING A CONSTRUCTION COMPANY THAT IS MINE

An interview with Ashleigh Hiemstra

Carpenter, Registered Builder and Director, Merge Building & NAWIC Chapter Education Committee Member (WA)

Whilst the under-representation of females working in construction trades is well documented, data suggests the tide is finally turning¹. Women have a growing presence on construction sites and are increasingly being drawn to trades, such as carpentry and electrical, that offer excellent employment and wage prospects.

The construction industry has also seen significant growth in female-led and female-owned businesses over the past few years. Ashleigh Hiemstra is one of the passionate, creative and inspirational women leading this charge. Ashleigh's role as Director of her own construction company, Merge Building, varies depending on what jobs she has under construction. A typical day might involve site visits, meeting with trades onsite to ensure all works are carried out as required, client liaison, organising the next stage of a build and following up with trades and suppliers. At the end of each day, Ashleigh can be found in her office quoting upcoming projects.

Tell us a bit about Merge Building

Merge Building is a small, boutique, residential construction company in Perth. My company specialises in second storey additions, extensions, whole home renovations and custom new builds. Merge Building helps clients from the beginning. I help them finalise their ideas and turn them into working drawings ready for quoting and securing a building permit.

What inspired you to pursue a career in construction?

I grew up around the building industry. My mum was

a builder in the early 1990s and my dad is a roof carpenter. During my gap year I started to think about my future. That's when I decided I wanted to pursue a career as a builder. So, I applied to study a Diploma of Building and Construction (Builders Registration) at TAFE.

Tell us about your career journey prior to creating Merge Building

Once I completed my Diploma at TAFE, I decided to do an apprenticeship in carpentry and joinery with my family's business. I knew I needed seven years practical experience in the trade to be eligible to apply for my building practitioner licences. I completed my apprenticeship in early 2014 and continued working with the family business as a qualified roof carpenter. Although there were some tough moments completing my trade, I love the skills and knowledge I have learnt and I love putting my skills to use in everyday life.

What made you decide to start your own business?

It was always my goal to be a builder. Once I was eligible to apply for my registration, I took the steps to start my own company. After working with my family's business for seven years, I wanted to create



1. CSQ 2021, Women in Construction - A Rising Trend 2021, CSQ, <<https://www.csq.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Women-in-Construction-2021.pdf>>



something that was mine and make my own mark in the industry.

Merge Building originally ran alongside the family business. I was on the tools completing the carpentry for the smaller jobs I was working on for my clients. I then made the choice to take Merge Building further after the birth of my son. I liked that working for myself meant I had the flexibility in my schedule to have some home, work and mum life balance.



Have you encountered any challenges as a female business owner?

Like anyone starting a business there has been some challenges. For me, one of the biggest challenges has been creating boundaries between my work schedule and personal life to ensure I have quality time with my son. Being a full-time, working mum has its own additional challenges.

Another challenge I have faced numerous times has been being questioned about my knowledge and skills by clients and other peers in the industry.

What do you see as the benefits of pursuing a career in the construction industry?

The careers are endless and there are many ways to get into the industry, from an apprenticeship to TAFE and university. The variety and daily challenges that you are faced with means every project is different. To see a project completed always gives me personally a great sense of achievement.

How important it is for more women to be encouraged to enter the construction industry?

It's so important. I am so passionate about supporting and encouraging females to enter the industry and especially into trades. This is one of the reasons I joined the NAWIC Education Committee. There is a lot more support and acceptance of females in the industry but there is still a long way to go when you see that females make up only 11% in the industry and 1% in construction trades.

What one piece of advice would you give to other women who thinking about a construction or trade career?

Go for it! I found it very daunting at first, especially in the first year of my apprenticeship. But soon my confidence grew and I loved the work that I was doing.

Tell us about your role on the NAWIC WA Education Committee

This year I am proud to be a part of the committee. NAWIC is a great community and there is such a variety of women following different careers in the industry. Every single member has a great story to share.

The committee have had plans to create a women's shed and/or workshops for the past year. So, it's a natural fit that I am taking the lead on this event and helping the committee make this a reality in 2021. **n**



"I love the skills and knowledge I have learnt and I love putting my skills to use in everyday life."

MY 2020

*= maternity leave + COVID-19 +
redundancy + starting a new business*

by Carly Zanini

Owner, Carly Zanini Consulting
& 2018 Sarah Constructions Crystal Vision Award Winner (SA)

2020 was always going to be a big year for me. It began with our first baby and when I was on maternity leave from the job I had worked hard to get. Suddenly it was April and COVID-19 had hit our shores. I was getting ready to return to the office when the unexpected happened. There had been a restructure and my position had been made redundant.

Initially there was shock, then admittedly panic. Suddenly I had to navigate the demands of a baby, plus an uncertain future in both my career and finances. The first thing I did was contact some recruiters I knew. I put the word out and I tried to feel optimistic. But in all honesty, I didn't feel ready to dive into a brand-new role that would require a lot of extra effort, as they all do when starting out. There was also the uncertainty of COVID-related working from home versus the office. Additionally, I knew that given the COVID-19 situation, the types of roles I'd be suited to may no longer be available, as businesses were navigating the dire circumstances and holding back on recruiting new staff members.

I'd always wanted to start my own business. I had a lot to offer with experience in many areas, from estimating to business development to digital engineering. I wanted to stay in the construction industry as I had dedicated a lot of time and effort to industry committees, councils and boards. Just before I went on maternity leave, I was on seven, varying from advocacy for women in construction, as well as technical groups and government boards. I was Chairperson of a couple, including NAWIC SA Education Chair. I'd also been inducted to the South Australian Women's Honour Roll for my advocacy work. I attended the ceremony just five weeks after giving birth. Suddenly I felt like I was adversely

affected by having a baby, even though a number of factors were at play.

With the support of my husband and family and a great network established over many years, I took the plunge. I was genuinely excited. Redundancy can be difficult to take. It can be hard to not feel like it's your fault. But this was the push I needed to take this next step in my career - 'business owner'. I have always had so much ambition and drive to succeed in my career and this was now amplified by having children, as I wanted to be a great example to them.

So, I established Carly Zanini Consulting. I made my way through the 'to-do' list of starting a business. I gained my first clients and got started. In summary, Carly Zanini Consulting works alongside businesses to develop high quality construction tender responses valued anywhere between \$1.5M and \$230M. I also provide business development services, including marketing collateral, award and grant submissions, that help South Australian companies succeed in their field of expertise.

THE STEPS I TOOK TO ESTABLISH MY OWN BUSINESS

1. I embraced the opportunity to step out of my comfort zone and create my own business (once I was over the redundancy panic).
2. I spoke to people doing similar things – sole traders, consultants and subject matter experts.
3. I embraced my network and mentors for advice and support.
4. I spent significant time on my brand identity. I created my own logo, website, social media accounts and marketing collateral. As a piece of advice, if this is not in your skillset, engage a professional to help.

COFFEE

*Booking a session with a
photographer meant Carly had
professional photos to support her
new business*



we are *bold + brave*



*Carly often takes
Florence to client
meetings*

Carly was inducted to the South Australian Women's Honour Roll 2019 for her work advocating for women in the construction industry.


5. I had a professional photo session in a style that suited me and my brand. I used the photos on my website, social media accounts and on my marketing collateral.
6. I utilised LinkedIn as much as possible, sharing updates about the business, events I attended and industry information.
7. I invested in the right equipment and technology for the services I was offering.
8. I took my time. I didn't want to rush the website, branding or social media, I wanted them to make a good first impression to the industry and potential clients.
9. I challenged the norm. I often take my daughter Florence to client meetings when appropriate. We were also recently on the front cover of Civil Contractors Federation SA magazine Civil Connect.
10. I continue to work extremely hard to provide a high-quality service that I'm proud of.

MY POSITIVES STEMMING FROM THE CHALLENGES OF 2020

1. **Family.** Our family life changed dramatically by welcoming our first child. The redundancy and ultimately starting my own business means I have more time to spend with my family and I am incredibly grateful for that.
2. **Flexibility.** Starting my own business has certainly meant more flexibility. This doesn't mean I don't work harder than ever before. It means I am able to create my own schedule. It often means working at night so I can take my daughter out during the day, taking her along to a client meeting or doing more via Zoom meetings.
3. **Ambition.** I am able to focus on the future of my business and shape the way that looks, always evolving and continuously inspired.
4. **Control.** Both in my business, as well as the work/life balance we all seek.
5. **Learning and development.** While I am not able to attend as many industry functions as when I was an employee, I continue to learn and develop my knowledge and skillset via other opportunities and research.
6. **Diversity of projects, clients and tasks.**
7. **Finally starting my own business.** A concept that was forever at the back of my mind.
8. **Channelling my energy in the right direction for the business.**
9. **Developing my own brand.** As a creative person, this aspect was wonderful and will continue to evolve.
10. **Repeat and referral clients.** An amazing feeling!

WHAT'S NEXT?

My husband and I are about to have our second baby; two under two. New challenges will present themselves, but we will take it all as it comes. I will continue to nurture the business into something I am proud of, while constantly evolving and striving for more. I believe my recent business success comes down to the relationships I have established with my clients. I genuinely want to see people succeed and they get that sense from the get-go. I believe in the outstanding quality of Australia's construction sector and love seeing the built environment develop around me. I would like to think I provide a great example of what can be achieved in minority groups and following challenging circumstances.

I will also continue to advocate for women in the construction industry, contributing to conversations around attracting, but also retaining, women in our sector. I believe that more information can be provided to construction-related employers via their industry associations. I'd like to help these businesses establish their parental policies, help them understand how they can support their female colleagues in various situations and encourage their staff to seek mentorship outside of their organisations. There is a long way to go but I am proud to be involved in this industry and proud of associations such as NAWIC for their valuable contributions. 

WEST GATE TUNNEL PROJECT

— *advancing women in the construction industry*



by Elizabeth De Castro Diaz & Patricia Tahitahi

Design Manager & Materials Coordinator,
CPB Contractors for CPBJH JV
& NAWIC Members

As part of the \$6.7B West Gate Tunnel Project, CPB Contractors and John Holland have committed to reach a 20% participation target of women in the project. To reach this goal, the joint venture established the West Gate Women in Construction Committee (WGWIC) to provide a platform to drive change and support the advancement of women in construction.

The aim of the Committee is to reach and maintain this target in blue and white-collar roles, as well as provide support and recognise the achievements of women on the project. The Committee is dedicated to educating and advising the project team on issues regarding gender equality. It also rewards positive behaviour to allow women to grow and develop their careers and profile, making way for more women in the industry.

REACHING THE TARGET

With support from project leadership, the West Gate Tunnel Project has exceeded the set target with up to 27.7% of women on the project at the highest peak. Although this percentage has fluctuated throughout the life of the project (one reason for this was the impact of COVID-19) the Committee has been instrumental in ensuring the targets are met and women are retained.

RECOGNISING AND CREATING AWARENESS

Since its creation in 2017, the Committee has regularly organised events and developed initiatives to provide networking opportunities, recognition and support to women on the project. Internal newsletters and the intranet are a continuous platform to promote our women and to raise their profiles on the project.

One of the yearly events that is now part of the life of the project is the International Women's Day commemoration. This year we had Michelle Garrity, a labourer on the project, share her journey in construction, how she has faced the challenges of being a woman in a male-dominated industry

and how the project provides a safe work environment for her to develop her skills.

We also had Sarah Hosking, an AFLW player with the Richmond Tigers, who spoke about her experience in sports and the various ways she has experienced gender bias and how she has overcome them.

Another big event for the Committee is the October Breast Cancer Campaign. Every year we have seen

participation grow. In 2020 we organised a partnership with Breast Cancer Network Australia and we presented them with a significant donation from the project team members. This was a particularly special year for the event, given one of our women had been diagnosed and was undergoing treatment for breast cancer at the time.

Big Pockets and Big Hearts, our Fundraising Committee, coordinated events year-round including BBQs, and collected an incredible \$9,420.

The end of year WGWIC Awards have also become a highlight of the Committee's initiatives. The awards recognise the achievements of women who are making a difference in the way the project operates. With four categories, the awards are a special platform to reward women, at different stages of their careers, and for their individual contributions.

The Committee is always encouraging women working on the project to network through organised events, such as the popular Christmas in July. We



also facilitate the participation of women in external networking events organised by other associations, such as the NAWIC Awards for Excellence, as well as various other industry events.

OUR CURRENT MEMBERS

The Committee is integrated for a diverse group of professionals that bring different perspectives and skills from industry to the table. Some of our current members are:

Amy Dowel, a Construction Leader on the project who continues to support and lead the way for



those around her. Amy was nominated for a NAWIC Award for Excellence in 2019 and is a hands-on leader for the CPBJH Joint Venture. Amy leads by example with a diverse construction team and encourages young female engineers to be their best.

Nominated in 2020 for a NAWIC Award for

to support and recognise women within her team. As an experienced Design Manager and mum of two, Elizabeth provides mentorship and guidance to younger engineers who are thinking of starting a family while developing their careers.



Patricia Tahitahi is a Materials Coordinator for the project with over 15 years' experience in the construction industry. She provides support to the blue-collar women and plays a key role as a conduit to the project and the Committee. Patricia received a Senior Leadership Recognition Award as one of the Top Ten Women in Thiess nationally as part of the female leadership group and is enthusiastic with regard to encouraging women to share their stories and support each other.

Chloe Lewis is a Graduate Engineer, played a lead role in the NAWIC Awards for Excellence nominations in 2020 and has been an active Committee member. She recently challenged herself to interview Construction Director, Anthony Vavallo and Supervisor Henry Lui in an online event. Chloe didn't shy away from the challenge, openly asking difficult questions to gain a better understanding of how we can all promote women in construction.

CREATING A LEGACY

The impact of the Committee has been far reaching with women that have left the project continuing to carry the flame and support and encourage women of all ages to strive to be their very best.

Jane Ogilvie, one of the founding members of the

Committee has now moved to the North Western Program Alliance, where they too have set up a Women's Committee and have reached 26% female participation.

The Committee is evidence that when targets are set and a platform is provided and supported by senior management, women are given a chance to thrive and reach their potential.

There is still much to



Excellence, Elizabeth De Castro provides leadership and support within the Committee, demonstrating a continuous commitment to the development of Committee initiatives. She is always looking for ways

do in the construction industry to achieve gender equality, but initiatives like this are great steps in the right direction to improve access to the industry and to support the economic recovery of the nation. ■

we care + connect

Olivia Roy, Plant Operator &
Leigh Turner, Senior Project
Engineer, Symal Group



MENTORING IS KEY TO A STRONG CAREER PATHWAY



by Elissa Stirling

Regional Manager - Victoria, Inhabit
& NAWIC Member

In 2019 the Victorian Government, in partnership with the Building Industry Consultative Council, launched a three-year strategy, Building Gender Equality: Women in Construction¹, to make women aware that construction is a viable and rewarding career option.

The strategy calls for inclusive and adaptive workplaces to ensure that women stay in the industry. "There will only be equal numbers of men and women working in construction if we take steps to attract, recruit and retain female workers," Tim Pallas, Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations, said on launching the strategy.

The strategy addresses issues such as the lack of encouragement for girls interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), few role models for girls, traditional views of men's work and women's work, gender stereotypes and rigid workplace practices and cultures of prejudice that exclude women and treat them as 'others.'

Key to the strategy is that while women must be proactively recruited, they must have access to strong career pathways. A collaborative study between the University of Sydney and Queensland University of Technology², published in the Journal of Management in Engineering in March this year, found that "while the construction industry is attracting women, and women are studying engineering and project management at a tertiary level, very few of these candidates are being properly progressed once they enter the workforce. This is not for lack of desire or motivation but is due to organisational issues."

While the first step is providing a robust policy for gender equality, real change occurs from within an

organisation's leadership team and providing support to women to navigate the challenges that arise. Mentoring is key to this.

I believe it is the responsibility of a company to engage and empower the next generation of graduates, regardless of gender, through training and structured, supportive mentoring. Mentoring can make a profound difference in the development of a young person's life when it is based on mutual respect, trust, sharing of knowledge and good communication.

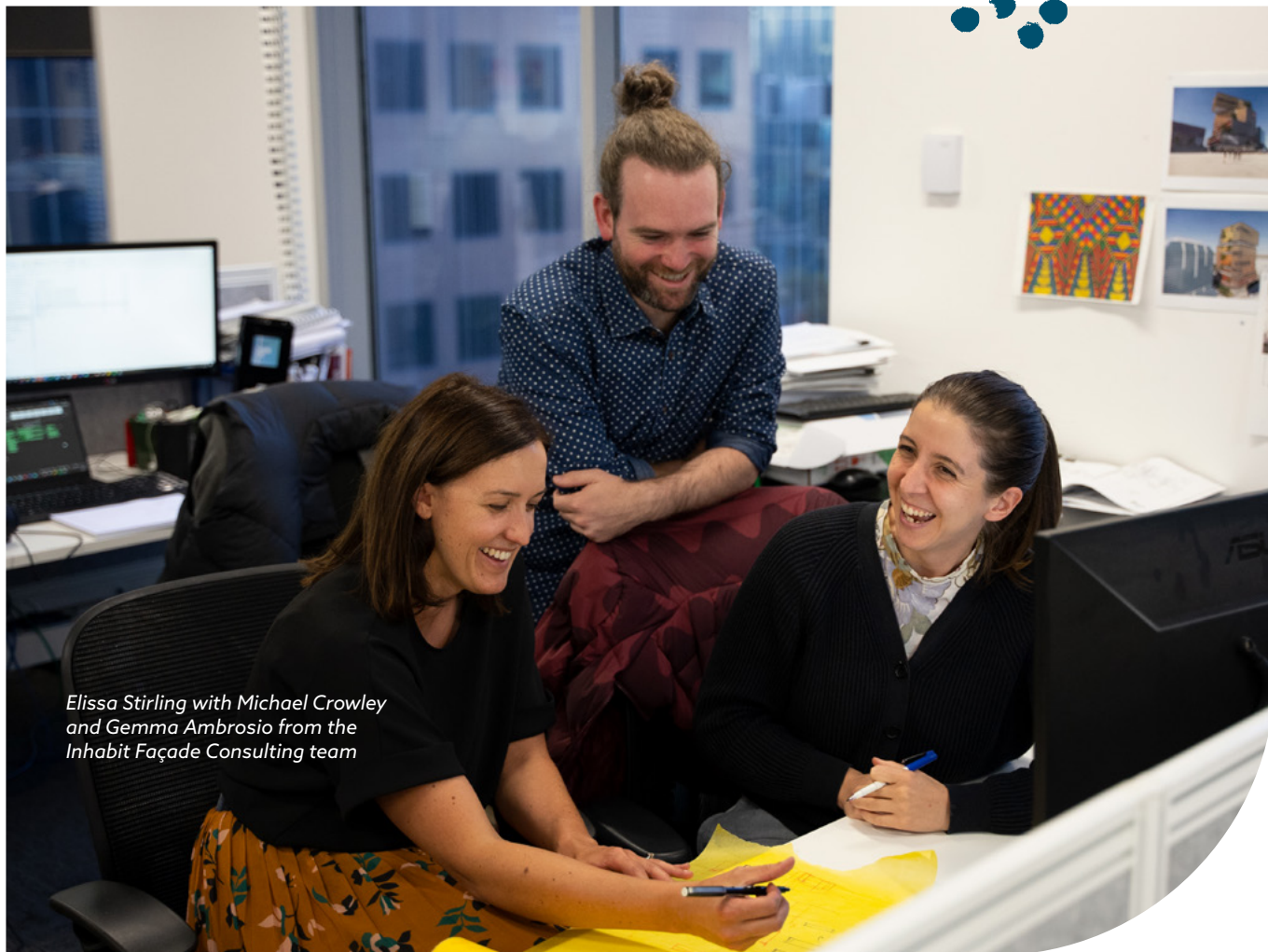
What I love about mentoring is that I learn as much as I teach - there is no hierarchy. It is two-way communication and is as good for my own professional development as it is for my mentees'. They have new and interesting perspectives on technology, the industry and society in general. It is a positive to have them engaged in creating a vibrant culture by challenging and contributing.

Growing up with many of my family and close friends as teachers, sharing knowledge and experience, is part of who I am. I enjoy teaching and am happy to spend time supporting our team in the way I have been supported throughout my career. In the 14 years I have spent in the construction industry I have found that people who share their knowledge tend to form supportive networks and create an engaged and creative workplace.

While studying architecture and construction management and in my first job in the construction industry, I was fortunate to work with David Hunton, one of the great icons of the façade industry in Australia. It was David who got me excited about construction and who shared his passion for

1. <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-women-construction-strategy>

2. <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2021/03/11/is-construction-dawdling-on-gender-progress-.html>



Elissa Stirling with Michael Crowley and Gemma Ambrosio from the Inhabit Façade Consulting team

façade design and engineering. He also gave me an appreciation for mentoring and how important it is to build a foundation for junior employees.

After working in Sydney and London I returned to Melbourne, looking for my next challenge and was drawn to join David again, where he was a Technical Director at Inhabit. As you progress in seniority through a company and are focused on managing people and projects, it is possible to lose touch with technical aspects of your field. David's ongoing mentoring at Inhabit meant we were always learning. Even in retirement he continued to advise and inspire and his passing in 2019 had a real effect on me as I reflected on the huge impact he had on my career. A legacy he left behind for many that he mentored.

Inhabit CEO Tony Alvaro continues to be a great mentor of our global team and also within the industry. He is strongly committed to supporting employees to achieve their full potential in an environment which fosters equity, fairness and diversity.

We are now at a point where globally, Inhabit has 32% women in its workforce in a wide range of key roles

including regional director, technical director, regional managers and associates. In Melbourne that figure increases to 47%.

During my career I have seen significant and positive change in the way women are treated in construction, but their retention in the industry is not just a 'women' problem. It falls on us all to make gender equality a reality. My philosophy on gender is that promoting women to get them up the ranks quickly puts unhealthy pressure on them, doesn't promote equality nor necessarily deliver great results. It is better to treat everyone equally and encourage a culture of equality for the long term.

I don't think we will have true equality in the workplace unless we get equality in the home. When men are reluctant to take paternity leave because it's frowned on by their company, then it falls on women to juggle maternity leave, childcare and the demands of their jobs. Real change occurs when men in senior positions take paternity leave and it sets the tone, allowing more junior men to say "It's okay for me to do so too."

The pandemic has certainly changed how we work.

“What I love about mentoring is that I learn as much as I teach - there is no hierarchy. It is two-way communication and is as good for my own professional development as it is for my mentees!”

I've found that the pandemic has improved our work from home set-up and businesses are more accommodating of flexible working arrangements. Clients are more receptive to taking my call where there may be a child in the background. Perhaps in Melbourne, because of the prolonged lockdown and closure of childcare, we've all had a window into other peoples' lives and feel more comfortable seeing women combine business and family in a new way.

As Victorian Regional Manager I'm now in a role where I am responsible for recruitment and I'm challenging myself to examine my unconscious bias. It is well established that we unconsciously look more favourably on people who are like us, whether it's by gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or nationality and, unless

we question the choices we are making, we may not end up with the best person in the job. Or, worse, we end up with a workplace that lacks the stimulation of diversity.

Whilst we still have a way to go in achieving gender equality at Inhabit, our progress is encouraging. Currently I am working with the next generation in my team to understand social procurement and sustainability. As part of that we focus on gender diversity, we are also looking at equality for people living with a disability, the rights of First Nations people, our response to domestic violence and how our business engages with these issues in a meaningful way.

Our goal is to have more diversity in our workforce - how we achieve this is the next big challenge for the construction industry. ■



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CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF INCLUSION IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Celebrating their 40th birthday this year, Canberra construction company Manteena are continuing to drive change in the construction industry. A long-time advocate for greater inclusion and diversity in the construction industry, Manteena have founded scholarships at the University of Canberra, created Indigenous Mentoring and Apprenticeship programs, supported a range of community organisations and are now a proud employer on the NAWIC Women in Construction Pathways Program.

The program, which is a joint program with NAWIC ACT, The Australian Training Company and Skills Canberra, aims to place 40 young women from Year 11 and 12 secondary school girls into Australian School Based Apprenticeships after a rotation through a range of Industry roles over 18 months. The participants get an incredible opportunity to try their hand at all aspects of the industry, from Trade roles, construction management through to architecture and engineering. So far Manteena has hosted three rotations over six months, and will host many more over the next two-year term.

Manteena Director and NAWIC ACT President Peita de Boer worked with the program's partners in 2019 to help kickstart the initiative, and is a passionate supporter. Since joining the program, Peita said, "Manteena is a strong believer in NAWIC's vision of building an equitable construction industry in which women fully participate. The first step of this journey is to normalise construction as a possible career path for young women, particularly high-school students."

Peita also added, "supporting girls who have the passion for a trade in the early years of high school is key to them starting on the pathway into the building & construction industry. While students in years 6 & 7 were often eager to try anything and take on a trade, by year 9 that often changes."

"When they get to that critical time of high school, there is risk of family saying, 'you shouldn't do that', or their school guidance counsellor might try and push them down a more traditional path...unless they actually have someone in the industry supporting them," Peita said.

The Program aims at bridging the significant gap which currently exists, where women make up just 11 per cent of the construction industry, according to 2018 data, and a mere 1 per cent were women in building trades.

Manteena Director and General Manager, Mark Bauer, said the next step was to emphasise the message that a construction career offers many opportunities for women.

"We need to try and reinforce the message to the next generation and also to the decision-makers—usually the parents—that it's an incredibly rewarding career, and there's a lot of support from companies out there," he said.



NAWIC ACT Diversity and Inclusion Award Winner 2019 – Manteena

"Manteena will continue to support NAWIC with the aim to make programs like this business as usual," Peita said. "Ultimately, when enough hosts get on-board and see the benefits for their organisation, it becomes a concerted industry effort and that can be the catalyst for lasting change. With programs like this, NAWIC's national goal of 25% minimum female participation across all of the construction industry by 2025 looks completely achievable!"

 **MANTEENA**
www.manteena.com.au

IF I CAN DO IT, ANYONE CAN

by Jo Matai

Commercial Manager, Lendlease
& NAWIC Chapter Education Committee Member (ACT)



My name is Jo Matai and I am a South African born, of Indian heritage, woman currently working within the construction management industry in Australia. It's an absolute honour to contribute to The NAWIC Journal 25th Anniversary Edition. Thank you NAWIC for the opportunity and for sharing the common vision of having an equitable construction industry.

My first contract deliverable within the construction industry dates back to 2013 where I worked for a subcontractor after completing my Diploma in Management. At the time I thought to myself, surely it will be OK for a South African Indian girl to work in the construction industry despite it not being the stereotypical 'home maker' role my culture imposes? After all, my mother and father immigrated to a first world country for better education, opportunity, freedom and safety, right? It was this point in my life that anything became possible and achievable in my mind.

In 2013, the industry as a whole, accepted women the same way it accepted me. The industry actually became 'accepting' of women in the late 1800s when Florence Mary Taylor, who was born in 1879, became Australia's first female architect after growing up assisting her father with his engineering calculations. However, accepting a person versus supporting and nurturing them to develop and succeed are two very different things.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, between 2019 and 2020, two-thirds of women aged 20-74 participated in the overall labour force. This is the highest rate Australia has seen in the past 10 years. We should congratulate ourselves and Australia on this, it is such a great achievement. Yet within the construction industry, we continue to represent a small 10-12% participation rate each year, with the second highest gender pay gap at 26.1%¹. We, NAWIC, are choosing to challenge these current statistics.

It never ceases to amaze me how we as women can be hitting a personal best in employment as a whole; yet be lacking so far within this one specific industry. You see, construction is an ever-evolving beast that makes the world go-around (I may be a little bias here). It creates a countless number of jobs worldwide, injecting millions into economies, providing homes for people to live in, hospitals to deliver medical care, shopping centres to provide groceries, parks for children to play in and the list goes on and on. Construction management is stressful, tiring and pressurising. It is also tremendously rewarding and personally fulfilling. Do you know how nice it is to walk away from a project and say, "yeah wow, I was a part of that?"

Perhaps the participation rate of women within the construction industry would increase if women were aware of organisations that existed, such as NAWIC, that have members like myself, amongst many others, who are willing to provide a strong support structure and to mentor them throughout their careers. Does the next South African Indian girl, or any girl really, realise that working within this industry is even a possibility and that NAWIC and its members strongly advocate not only for participation but also for diversity?

I hope so, because I ended up academically qualified in Management (Diploma), Construction (Degree) and Law (Degree - in progress), now employed in a commercial management role, with on-site experience across two states working successfully for some of Australia's best commercial builders on a great range of projects. If I can do it, anyone can do it. NAWIC, the extended Committee Members and I are here to support and facilitate this process for anyone willing to give it a shot, at any point in time.

Happy 25th Birthday NAWIC! 

1. WGEA 2020, Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard – Key Results from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's 2019-2020 Reporting Data, WGEA, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019-20%20Gender%20Equality%20Scorecard_FINAL.pdf>



THE POWER OF SUPPORT GROUPS IN ENABLING TRADESWOMEN TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

An interview with Sarah Brunton

Safety Trainer/Assessor, ERGT Australia
Founding Member, SALT and Sparkettes
& 2016 NAWIC Award to a Tradesperson Winner (NT)

National data reveals an increasing number of Australian women are putting up their hands to work in construction trades¹. But despite this progress, women are still in the minority and can often feel disconnected from female peers and role models. Without these connections, women working in construction trades may not reach their full potential or they may leave the industry altogether. That's where support, networking and mentoring groups, like SALT and the Sparkettes, come in.

The Sparkettes is a not-for-profit group of women in the electrical industry who meet on a regular basis to discuss work-related topics and to support each other. The Sparkettes promote the industry via school talks, mentorship of young apprentices and by connecting women in the trade. Sarah Brunton is one of the founders of the initial group – the Darwin Sparkettes – which was established in 2013. The group now has over 400 members and Sarah continues to play an active part. The Darwin Sparkettes also won the 2016 Sitzer Award for Diversity (NT).

Tell us about your career journey

I have been an electrician for over 20 years. For most of my career I have worked in mining and in the oil and gas and construction industries. I currently work for ERGT as a Trainer/Assessor. ERGT specialise in Oil and Gas Safety Training for workers and emergency response teams.

Throughout my career I have never had a female work role model. I had to leave the Northern Territory to get an apprenticeship as I wasn't able to find one after

I left school. There were just no women doing what I was doing.

In my first fly-in fly-out (FIFO) job there was no other women living in the camp. Women who were employed onsite worked in the office and were accommodated in motels in the local town. I remember checking into the camp and the camp manager saying "I have no idea where to put you because you can't share a bathroom with the men." I waited to the side while he checked in everyone else. Not all the dongas had their own bathroom facilities. Eventually he put me into a 'supervisor' cabin which had its own ensuite. I didn't meet another female licenced electrician onsite until 2008.

Tell us how to came to establish SALT and Sparkettes

During my career there have been a lot of challenges because of gender. Due to these challenges, and not having a work sister to look up to or talk to for the best part of my career, I felt it was important to be that work sister for other female workers.

I met Fi Shewring, SALT President, in 2009 while I was doing some work for the Electrical Trades Union in Sydney. We both had ideas about starting a support group for tradeswomen. Long story short, SALT was founded by a group of seven women in Wollongong in 2009. You only have to follow the SALT social media accounts to see the goals being kicked by the crew there. I am very proud to have been one of the founding members. I am back home in the Northern Territory these days so do not have any active roles with SALT (apart from liking posts on Facebook).



1. CSQ 2021, Women in Construction - A Rising Trend 2021, CSQ, <<https://www.csq.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Women-in-Construction-2021.pdf>>

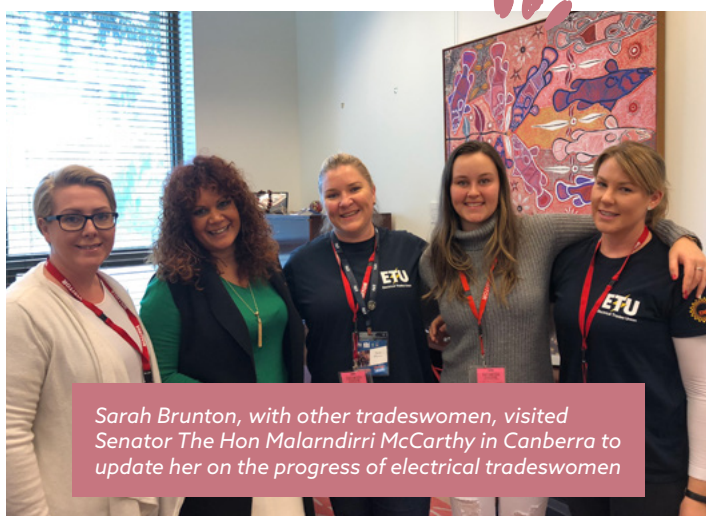


Sarah Brunton was recently appointed to the NT Electrical Workers and Contractors Licensing Board

career option. This then follows through to ensuring that women have representation in decision-making bodies related to our jobs such as unions.

What do you see as the benefits pursuing a trade career in the construction industry?

The construction industry is dynamic, fun and challenges your problem-solving abilities. It is also an amazing industry for camaraderie and team work and it provides immense job satisfaction when completing something.



Sarah Brunton, with other tradeswomen, visited Senator The Hon Malarndirri McCarthy in Canberra to update her on the progress of electrical tradeswomen

Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen (SALT) provides a support network for tradeswomen, apprentices and women who wish to enter the trades. To find out more visit saltaustralia.org.au

The Darwin Sparkettes is a group female sparkies in and around Darwin who want to encourage more people to consider getting a trade. To learn more visit facebook.com/DarwinSparkettes

Similarly, Sparkettes came about initially in the Northern Territory. It was founded by a group of six or seven electrical workers who were also wanting to connect, support and mentor each other. As a team we thought it was important to 'normalise' being a tradeswoman and for school students to see us as role models for their own careers. A number of Sparkettes are working in supervisory and technical roles now while maintaining a connection to the next generation of women coming through.

Sparkettes now has crews in most states and territories who can connect and mentor other women in electrical trades.

Why did you see a need to create Sparkettes?

I personally had no career role models. I did not want any other tradeswomen to feel like they were alone too.

Can you tell us some positive changes you've seen thanks to SALT, Sparkettes and NAWIC?

Hands down the most positive change I have seen is the power of women sticking together to have their voices heard. It might be to achieve appropriate amenities onsite or for the stores to stock size 7 gloves and women's PPE. It might also be visiting schools and career expos to talk about being a tradeswoman as a viable

How important it is for more women to be encouraged to pursue a trade career?

Currently women make up less than 2% of licenced electrical workers in Australia. I believe it is important to get as many women to pursue trades as possible. I think that workplaces are starting to get used to the idea that women can do the work. We still have a long way to go to get an even balance in my trade. If women are not encouraged to participate in male-dominated industries then this will never change.

Women can also earn good money as tradies, they have opportunities to travel and they will have a skill for life.

What is one piece of advice would you give to other women who are considering a trade career?

Stick with it, be above reproach and connect with other women who are working in male-dominated industries. **n**

EMPOWERING WOMEN TO STAND TALL



by Anna Broughton

Director, NS Group
& NAWIC Chapter Major Event Committee
Member and 2020 Arup Business &
Leadership Award Winner (WA)

Since the Australian Government's Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) published its inaugural *Gender Equality Scorecard* from data collected in 2013-14, the proportion of women working in the construction industry has seen a measly 2% increase from 16.1% to 18.1% in the latest 2019-2020 report.

During the same period, the composition of females in management roles in this industry has crept upwards from 10.8% to 13%. Clearly, the challenge of achieving gender diversity in construction continues to be significant.

As a proud mother to a son and daughter, Harrison and Grace, I want them to grow up believing they can become anyone they choose and achieve anything humanly possible. My wish is that they will be afforded the same opportunities, free of any artificial barriers, to explore their purpose and reach their full potential. Hopefully, this comes true in my lifetime and I am committed to playing a role in making sure that it happens.

With my other hat on as a Director at NS Group, and as part of a wider network of industry peers, tackling the gender diversity issue is high on my agenda as we continue working towards equalising the playing field for women.

Gender equality is also the reason why I decided to get involved with NAWIC's WA Chapter as a Committee Member because of the association's ability to champion women in our industry across Australia.

A FORCE FOR CHANGE

I have been blessed with wonderful role models in my life and throughout my career. Growing up in Ireland, my late father worked in construction and instilled a work ethic that meant you kept going until the job was done. You dug deep and then dug deeper still, not because someone asked but because you took pride in your work.



I moved to Australia through a work transfer in 2006 and in 2007 I was invited to interview for a position at NS Group with then Founder Neill Stevens. Despite interviewing for a different role, Neill saw the potential I had to succeed as a project manager.

I am privileged and proud to work in a company that rewards based on merit and promotes staff regardless of gender. I am incredibly thankful for the opportunities that have been made available to me and, so far, I have been able to overcome any barrier through determination and hard work.

Sadly, maybe I am one of the lucky ones. That is why I use my experience and position to encourage and empower others by demonstrating what a woman can achieve in our industry. Ultimately, I want to be part of the change that sees women in construction and leadership positions become the norm and not the exception.

There are many ways we can stimulate greater female participation in male-dominated industries such as ours. Some effective initiatives include highlighting possible career paths earlier to students during their school-aged years, sharing stories of inspirational and successful women across the industry and supporting individuals through workplace development and mentoring initiatives.

Whilst my company is involved in all of the above, I have also made a personal commitment to champion gender equality in the workplace through industry committees and speaking opportunities.

However, I believe mentoring is perhaps the most powerful – and underestimated – means to make a tangible impact. Mentoring not only benefits individuals, it also allows for an indirect flow-on effect over time through nurturing more successful women into our industry who will, in turn, become role models themselves and mentors to future generations.



“For me, watching a mentee become more confident, setting the bar higher for themselves and taking charge of their career are the most satisfying rewards.”

learned through my own journey and that others could benefit from my experiences. It also gave me the confidence to believe in my abilities as a mentor.

The following year, I continued as an AIPM mentor and was matched with a more senior professional within our industry. I keep in touch with these mentees and relish hearing about their subsequent journeys and successes.

I have also participated in the Property Council of Australia's 500 Women in Property program as a sponsor. In this role, I expanded the network of my paired participant through facilitating introductions and opening doors to new events and opportunities.

This year, I joined the NAWIC Chapter Mentoring Program (WA) and have been matched with an amazing woman who has newly taken on a leadership position within her company. Her company has recognised the value of her trade background and the gravitas of the NAWIC Award for Excellence (WA) she received in 2020.

My mentee is entering an exciting stage in her career and it has provided excellent insight into how one of our team members feels when they get a promotion. It has helped me understand how I might better assist them with a transition to management and set them up for success. I am delighted that I can draw upon my career to help her navigate her new role and responsibilities.



BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH MENTORING

Various managers have taken me under their wing to enhance on-the-job learning through informal mentoring throughout my working life. I have leaned on specialist mentors and coaches to hone my strengths and develop strategies to achieve my career ambitions. Even today, I have a mentor outside of the company who is helping me to understand how to be a more effective director responsible for overseeing national company operations.

My first official mentoring role was through the Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM) in 2019. The student mentoring program was a good entry point for me as a new mentor, despite the 10 years of experience I already held, and it made me realise how much I had

THE REWARDS OF PAYING IT FORWARD

I genuinely believe in the value of mentoring because women sometimes need to hear relatable experiences, shared wisdom and words of encouragement to realise their worth.

As mentors, we have the power to give people a balanced and positive perspective over their inner voices, often laden with negative thoughts which hold them back. We can tell them that they are good enough, spark the courage to grow and shine and help them aim for more than they ever thought possible. For me, watching a mentee become more confident, setting the bar higher for themselves and taking charge of their career are the most satisfying rewards.

In 2020, I was extremely humbled to win the national AIPM Mentor of the Year Award. I was nominated by a mentee who felt she had received so much value through her mentoring experience with me. The award came as a complete, but very happy, surprise.

Mentoring is a two-way exchange that benefits both parties: mentees learn from their mentors' knowledge, experience, and achievements and mentors have the chance to give back whilst reflecting on their careers and workplaces. The value mentors get from the experience far outweighs the one-hour time commitment each month.

I am a firm believer in lifelong learning as it opens so many avenues for growth and new opportunities, both personally and professionally. I would highly encourage all senior professionals to consider being a mentor because mentoring enables a unique opportunity to learn through a shared and tailored experience that often results in a long-term connection. **■**

MY CONSTRUCTION HEROES

by Kara Chisholm

Senior Environment Officer, Transport for NSW
& 2021 NAWIC Chapter Mentoring Program Mentee (NSW)

My decade of working as a female environmental advisor in the construction industry began when I was 21 years old. I was young, unknowledgeable and frankly, downright scared.

I began a career working on site, where I was required to relocate roughly every three years for a new project. I was also required to attend and speak at pre-starts, which consisted of 100 or so men, early each morning and work 12-hour days to hit tight deadlines.

The industry is facing some serious challenges in diversity and mental health and it still has a long way to go. But in a world of the #metoo movement and increasing reports of calling out the 'old school', unhealthy behaviour in the industry (which I am all for), I want to pay recognition to some others who have contributed to changing the industry. Not the amazing women who are creating awareness and rallying for equal pay, but the everyday superintendent, foreman and managers who have been my male role models and to be honest, are probably the only reason I am still working in the construction industry.

Throughout my career I have come across these (generally older) men, onsite and in the office. They have not only looked out for me at work, they have become close friends who greatly impact my personal life. Because of project work, I am living away from family, and I unfortunately don't have any older brothers. Throughout every project I have worked on, I have met these men that have invited me to attend dinner with their families and hang out with their

kids, they have listened to me cry over multiple break ups, consistently given me life advice and encouraged me to become the best version of myself. They have coached me through any work issues and have consistently had my back whether it be protecting me from that 'snide' comment that someone on site has said, or backing me up in a meeting when things are getting heated and when I'm the only female in the room.

Throughout the last decade I have witnessed these guys on a daily basis being amazing male role models not only at work, but in their personal lives.

The industry is moving towards promoting STEM subjects to high school girls and making what was an outdated industry, more appealing to women. The benefits of being a young woman in the construction industry are severely undervalued and not recognised. Yes, the negatives are real and yes, I have consistently experienced prejudice and sexism in the industry.

However, a support network like I have in the world of construction is the most valuable tool a girl can have and the impact on a woman's professional and personal development is immeasurable and overlooked.

To all those male role models supporting the females onsite "you go guys" we truly appreciate it. **■**



Kara Chisholm with her male role models Con Boutsikakis and Chris Greenaway. Kara would also like to especially thank Tim Gooley, Adam Wood, Damian Wagner, Innes Menke, Peter Higgs, Chris McCallum, Shannon Chisholm and Paul Duncan

DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

— *two leaders paving the way*



by Carolyn Whyte

Freelance Writer,
Carolyn Whyte Research & Writing

NAWIC's 25th Anniversary provides a significant opportunity to reflect on the progress of women in construction and to consider how we accelerate momentum. There is no single way to be a woman in construction and no single innovation that will advance gender equality in our industry. Instead, we will get there through multiple interventions that encourage sustained cultural change.

I NEED TO SEE YOU

Marian Wright Edelman, African American educator and President of the Children's Defence Fund, coined the phrase "It's hard to be what you can't see" concerning children's books and the interconnected impacts of representation. It feels like a piece of logic you've innately always known, but Edelman only wrote it in 2015.

One woman's words of profound logic have quickly become accepted wisdom. In this example we see that social innovations occur through the creation of access to unconsidered ideas that have the power to topple prevailing norms and biases. This cannot happen alone, you need a sponsor and confidant to motivate and challenge you.

The work being undertaken at Built Victoria by two key construction industry leaders and allies: Jennifer Marks, Director - Victoria, and Monica Fontaine, Construction Manager and Health Sector Lead, provides an example for young women in construction. The pair have established a self-initiated

partnership that could not have previously existed for either woman during their combined experience of over 45 years. They are unified in the objective of improving gender equality in the construction industry and supporting women who love the challenges of construction, as much as they do, to progress unhindered and surpass their own achievements.

Jen and Mon are digging through decades of industry experience to learn from the many moments that make a career, transforming what they have learned into actions and advice towards the retention, recruitment and improved parity for women in construction. They share a passion and rare expertise in the technical and operational aspects of their profession. As business leaders their visibility includes promoting values that focus on 'authenticity', 'effort' and 'innovation', rather than just results, to encourage a more inclusive working environment.

Jen and Mon have been driving forces behind their organisation doubling the industry average of women across all levels of the business. Spurred on by the 2021 International Women's Day theme #choosetochallenge Jen is pushing targets higher, setting bold goals of minimum 25% women across all levels of decision making by 2024. Considering that less than 10% of people entering construction are women and that women leave the industry at a rate 39% faster than men, Jen understands the challenges but with the support of her organisation she is ready to overcome them.

we care + connect



*Jennifer Marks and
Monica Fontaine*

“The opportunities that Jen and Mon have given some of the community’s most vulnerable people has been incredible to watch, the doors they have opened for our young people, as well as their time commitment and innovative ideas for social procurement are admirable.”

Claire Gilbert, Salvation Army



I WILL HELP YOU GET THERE

Mon spent the majority of her career as the most senior woman wherever she worked. With just 13% of managers in the industry being women, she had rarely worked with, or been mentored by senior women, and at times felt isolated. When Jen projected a pathway for Mon, it was the first time she was being encouraged by a senior woman. This enhanced her belief that the pathway was real and possible.

Both women have progressed at Built independently of one another however, they are unified towards advancing gender equality at the societal, industry, organisational and individual levels. Each recognising the interconnectedness of each realm towards creating broader cultural change, understanding that pockets of equality will not support us all.

“I have spent my entire career with a reporting structure that was void of any women, not having any women in senior roles at those businesses to look up to for support or mentoring. I was never looking to leave where I was working, but Jen convinced me to have a coffee to just have a chat about building the health sector at Built. It stands out as a real pivotal moment in my career that just continues to offer me opportunities to grow as a leader in this industry and hopefully be visible enough so other women see it as a viable industry to work in.”

Mon demonstrates leadership that empowers women in the Built graduate program, across the industry and also in the community, where she ensures that her impact extends beyond the traditional metrics of project success. In partnering with the Salvation Army Youth Services, who provide programs like ‘Tools of the Trade’, Mon has implemented initiatives and leveraged networks to provide financial support and opportunities for disadvantaged young women to experience what a career in construction could offer.

MEASURING UP THE CHALLENGE

Jen and Mon belong to an organisation that wants to take steps to realise gender equality, is willing to face them and listen to how substantive improvements

can be made. Both women are crafting a strategy to attract the best talent and support progression for the amazing women they are already lucky to be working with.

Towards this goal, Jen is championing the implementation of a sponsorship program by Cultivate. Sponsorship is a strategic alliance between a senior leader and an emerging female leader. The research-based program, developed by Dr Natalie Galea and Katriina Tahka sees the leader invest in the success of the emerging leader by providing skills development, advocacy and support. According to Jen ‘advocacy’ is the key to success and what makes sponsorship distinct from mentoring.

GETTING THERE TOGETHER

Jen and Mon have evolved to a place where they can challenge and encourage each other and those around them to recognise that which goes unnoticed and to enact change through concrete actions. Both women recognise that the significant gender pay gap and inconsistent parental leave policies are just some of the major problems that need to be solved within construction. They see varied solutions, but agree they need to stick together and collaborate with women within, and beyond, the industry to find ways forward as well as advocating for the inclusion of women on boards and remuneration committees, as this is a crucial step in the shift towards gender equality.

Women in construction represent a diverse and multidisciplinary set of professionals who are problem solvers by trade. Jen and Mon are proud to belong to a profession that accepts complexity as part of its core business. They find joy in the diversity of experiences shared by the women that they mentor and meet, witnessing the discovery of new skills or achieving the hard fought wins. Those are the moments that make the work of being a leader in the construction enduringly worthwhile. For Jen and Mon, those are the moments that guarantee the exciting future that exists for women in construction. **■**



A CAREER THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

From an early age engineer Sachini De Silva had an interest in pursuing a career that would have a positive impact on the community.

She attended an all-girls school, where there was a lot of encouragement for students to consider careers in STEM. After taking part in a program where she had the opportunity to experience 'a day in the life of an engineer' she realised it was a profession that would allow her to combine her skills with her passion for humanitarian impact.

During her time studying Engineering at UNSW, Sachini volunteered for Engineers Without Borders in their WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) team which was an eye-opening experience and took her ideas further than she ever imagined possible.

"One of the first Engineers Without Borders projects I worked on was for a community in Cambodia, where over 100,000 people live in floating villages, one being on the Tonle Sap Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Asia. The water is used by children to play in and is used for washing dishes and clothes. The same water is also used for depositing human waste as most people cannot afford a toilet."

"Designing local solutions for global impact, we developed a ceramic filter made from fired clay that can treat the water so that it is safe to use on a household level, reducing the spread of disease," said Sachini.

She then joined Aurecon as a graduate and one of the first projects she worked on was Project Gilghi, a breakthrough grid water purifying system for use remote Indigenous communities.



Sachini played an integral role in Project Gilghi, which provides clean water to Indigenous communities

Gilghi means 'water' or 'place of water' in the Barkindji (Baar-kinji) Indigenous language and this project provided the community of Gillen Bore with ownership over their water supply, where the long-term sustainability of the water supply is guaranteed, health outcomes can be improved and employment opportunities are created.

"Access to clean drinking water is a problem throughout the world and in Australia affects communities in more remote locations. More than 48,000 Australians rely on groundwater as their only option for water supply. Having clean water is a significant step towards UN Sustainable Development Goal 6, where Gilghi has provided immediate and permanent access to clean and contaminant free drinking water."

Sachini said, "As a graduate, Gilghi was an incredible opportunity to learn from senior leaders in Aurecon like Julian Briggs, Global Expertise Leader for Water and Wastewater Treatment, because I got to work directly with him. At Uni you're focused on your own degree, which for me was chemical engineering. But when you work on these types of projects, you learn how important it is to collaborate with other technical disciplines, where I had the chance to work with our partner Ampcontrol and learn about electrical systems."

When asked what advice she would give to young women looking to pursue careers in STEM, Sachini said networking is key.

"Network as much as you can and talk to people. What still surprises me, is just how big the engineering industry is and all the things that I can learn and contribute to by being a part of it. I now have very successful and visible role models that I look up to. Each of them has taken a different path and by learning from them over the years I understand there are different ways to get where they are. Some might work for me or not, but through networking I learn and continue to develop."

we advocate for change



Penny Ransom, Head of Investment Management, Investa; **Nellie O'Keeffe**, Development Director, Oxford; **Kirsten Evans**, Project Director, CPB Contractors; **Lucinda Mander-Jones**, Senior Development Manager, Investa & **Meg Dutta**, Senior Project Manager, TSA

WORKING WITH THE AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC PROGRAM

- a life-changing experience



by Maree Riley

Organisational Psychologist,
Australian Antarctic Division

Living and working in Antarctica is the opportunity of a lifetime. Just ask Amy Hobbs. "It's a fascinating place to work. You are exposed to such a wild, forever-changing place, that you know not many people will experience. You work and live so closely with a small crew of people that they become more than just work colleagues, but some very good friends that I will have for life," she says.

Amy had worked as a mechanical engineer in various industries across mining, defence, construction and fuel systems for about 15 years. She was also fascinated by Antarctica enough to travel to the Antarctic Peninsula as a tourist.

"It wasn't long after that trip that an advertisement came up in my Facebook feed for jobs with the Australian Antarctic Division. That peaked my interest and to my surprise, I found a role as an Engineering Services Supervisor (ESS) that pretty closely matched my skill set," says Amy.

Each year the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) recruits around 180 people, across 25 different roles, to live and work on one of our four research stations. The experience can be life-changing.

"I eventually went down to Casey station as a summer ESS where I spent four months working with a diverse team of tradespeople and living with an even more diverse station crew," Amy says.

"I have since spent a further 12 month expedition over winter, and a summer expedition in Antarctica as an ESS."

THE AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC PROGRAM

The AAD runs the Australian Antarctic Program, which needs highly-skilled and passionate people to support Australia's world-class scientific research to answer key questions of global significance. Australia has three research stations in Antarctica - Casey, Davis and Mawson - and one on sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island.

The population at each station ranges between 40 and 100 expeditioners over summer and 15 to 25 over the winter months. Each season more than 500 expeditioners travel south with the Australian Antarctic Program, although this number was reduced in 2020 due to the pandemic. Employment contracts are seasonal and generally for between 4 and 15 months.

Each station is like a small town with a diverse and dedicated workforce, comprising station leaders, mechanical and infrastructure tradespeople, field training officers, scientists, doctors, chefs, Bureau of Meteorology observers and communications technicians. We also have a team of people supporting our shipping and aviation activities. Expeditioners are supported by head office staff experienced in Antarctic policy, law, operations, medicine, science and media.

Summer months are generally busy with scientific research and a range of infrastructure projects being undertaken. Across the winter months the tempo reduces with environmental conditions limiting



Engineering Services Supervisor,
Amy Hobbs at Vanderford Glacier

© Amy Hobbs/Australian Antarctic Division



Moon over Casey
research station

© Chris Wilson/Australian Antarctic Division

station activities to essential requirements only, alongside a small amount of research. While the population varies across the summer, reflecting the vast array of work and projects undertaken, the smaller station population over winter is focused primarily on maintaining the station.

For example, says Amy, the role of an Engineering Services Supervisor can be quite varied.

"You're supervising and guiding a highly skilled team of tradespeople through the challenges of maintaining and upgrading a whole

range of infrastructure on station from electrical distributions systems, building HVAC, water production and distribution, to even the gymnasium and kitchen equipment," she says.

Like any small town, Australia's Antarctic stations have facilities for power generation, sewage works, water making, vehicle maintenance, general living, medical and working locations. As the stations are 'off grid', the trades roles are responsible for maintaining the lifelines of electricity, heat and water.

The general living quarters are very well-appointed with expeditioners having their own rooms (with shared bathrooms) and access to communal living and eating areas. Station life is very social and well set up with a gym, climbing wall, library and a range of facilities to allow expeditioners to pursue a range of hobbies, recreational and leisure pursuits.

Research stations in Antarctica are self-sustaining and rely on everyone to participate in communal duties (such as cleaning and kitchen duties and general maintenance) to support the day-to-day functioning of the station. As an



expeditioner you can also expect to be involved in a range of secondary duties including an emergency response team, fire team, lay surgical assistant roles, hydroponics - even as station photographer, hairdresser or postmaster.

Beyond exposure to remarkable scenery and wildlife, living and working on station is a chance to develop close working relationships and social connections with expeditioners from all walks of life. For many of our expeditioners, the best part about working in Antarctica is the teamwork and life-long friendships that develop. Importantly, communications technology on our stations allows expeditioners to maintain ongoing contact with family and friends back home.

WOMEN IN THE AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC PROGRAM

Approximately a quarter of our expeditioners are women but to date their representation across trade roles has been low. We are invested in changing this now and into the future.

Women have been travelling south for decades and are an integral part of all aspects of the Australian Antarctic Program. Our journey to deliver a world-

class program built on diversity, equity and inclusion is continually evolving. Central to this has been the introduction of our Gender Equity Strategy in 2020.

This strategy includes promoting opportunities for women in our annual recruitment campaigns and providing workplaces that are flexible, inclusive and respectful. We have also invested in ensuring women in our program have specialised-fit Antarctic PPE. The commitment to achieve gender equity within the Australian Antarctic Program is championed at the very highest levels of the organisation.

WHAT ROLES DO WE HAVE ON OFFER?

Alongside a range of station support, telecommunications, mechanical services and aviation roles, we invite applications across a range of infrastructure roles, including:

- Electrician/Instrument Electrician
- Plumber
- Carpenter
- Fitter and Turner
- Boilermaker Welder
- Rigger
- Building Services Supervisor
- Engineering Services Supervisor

Employment with the Australian Antarctic Program provides the opportunity for expeditioners to gain new and unique skills and experience, unmatched in any other job. Roles in Antarctica offer not only enhanced trade skills but also the experience of living and working in a small self-sustaining community and the opportunity to participate in scientific research programs such as seal or penguin surveys or sea ice monitoring. Expeditioners routinely talk about the professional and personal growth that an experience like this provides.


Women have been travelling south for decades and are an integral part of all aspects of the Australian Antarctic Program. Our journey to deliver a world-class program built on diversity, equity and inclusion is continually evolving. Central to this has been the introduction of our Gender Equity Strategy in 2020.



*Emperor penguins
and their chicks*

© Gary Miller/Australian Antarctic Division

Amy Hobbs says she's ready for more tours of duty in Antarctica.

"It doesn't come without its challenges, it requires you to use all those 'soft' skill sets, which as a technical person, sometimes doesn't come easily, but without a doubt it's worth it. Even though I'm back working in Melbourne, after having done three seasons close together, I can honestly say Antarctica 'gets in your blood', I'm still not done with it yet. I hope to have many more seasons down south working for an amazing program in an amazing place." 

Engineering Services Supervisor,
Amy Hobbs discussing a quick change
of plan during station resupply



© David Barringhaus/Australian Antarctic Division

HERE'S HOW TO APPLY

If the opportunity to live and work on an Australian Antarctic or sub-Antarctic research station is something that appeals to you, have a look at <https://jobs.antarctica.gov.au/>.

Our annual recruitment campaign generally commences mid-December but you can register your interest at any time and we will contact you when applications open.

To be found suitable for the program you will undertake extensive technical, medical and psychological assessments, as well as an assessment of your personal qualities.

You can read more about these assessments at our jobs website, or contact recruitment@aad.gov.au. The selection process is extensive but well worth what awaits if you are selected into the program.

Even if you do not have the necessary skills and experience just yet, or now may not be the best time for you to take up a position with the Australian Antarctic Program, we would encourage you to get in touch and have a chat about how you may prepare for a future application.

Amy Hobbs and Doreen McCurdy
at Casey research station



©Doreen McCurdy/Australian Antarctic Division

WHENEVER YOU THINK NO ONE IS THERE FOR YOU, LAUNDRY WILL BE THERE FOR YOU



by Lina McIvor

Design Manager, Multiplex,
& 2018 Hickory Group Outstanding Achievement
in Design Award Winner (VIC)

When my husband had the opportunity to take 14 weeks parental leave with our baby Ella while I returned to work, he daydreamed about woodworking in the shed and taking the pram around the golf course.

For Ella's first birthday I wanted a 'Pikler' set, a wooden climbing set consisting of a triangle, cube and slide. My husband said excitedly, "Don't buy one, I will make her one!" Although I was doubtful, I gave him a deadline - her birthday, right before he returned to work. And so, as he eagerly finished up work for the year, he told his boss that he was looking forward to his time off. "You mean your time on?" his boss said.

So after nearly 10 months of me timing 'feed, sleep, play' and nappy changes, while doing all of the laundry, cooking, food shopping and most of the dishes and cleaning, while my husband worked and did bath time with the baby, we pretty much did a straight swap.

This wasn't easy for me as I was used to carrying the mental load of running the house. It took me a while to let go and walk past the dirty washing in the laundry and the food shopping left sitting on the bench.

We had a couple of weeks over Christmas when we were both off work, so by the time I went back I was confident my husband mostly had the hang of things.

One day I overheard my husband on the phone to his sister saying that he now understands our 'on demand' schedule of nap times, constant meals and snacks and frequent cloth nappy changes to prevent nappy rash, but that he doesn't need a schedule for laundry because there is always laundry. In fact, he said, he now couldn't fully enjoy sitting on the couch because it just reminded him that he probably should be doing laundry. At the same time, he also developed a fantastic bond with Ella, excitedly showing me how he taught her to 'share' when I got home from work, and beaming proudly as she learnt to walk on her walker. Weekend outings became easier too as looking after her was now second nature to him even when we were all together.

What I didn't expect though was how much easier it felt going to work when I didn't have to prepare anything in the morning and could come home from work to play with her while my husband cooked dinner. Weekends were easier too because if there was a growing pile of laundry that accumulated, I knew someone else would do it during the week. It really made me reflect on a book I had recently read, "The Wife Draught" by Annabel Krabb, realising that men often have it so much easier working without worrying about running the house, while women often have to juggle both.

Now that my husband is back at work we are juggling daycare pickups and drop-offs, part-time work, housework and general daily life. However, I feel my husband has gained an understanding of the work required to raise a small child while running the household, which I hope will encourage him not only to strive for a better work-life balance but also a better balance of responsibilities between us.

Many of my girlfriends have observed that our experience would have benefitted their families, but unfortunately not everyone has this opportunity and it is not easy to create a shift towards an equal share in both parents raising their children and sharing the workload of the house. I believe that this is the next step required in creating equality and freedom from stereotypes for both women and men.

Also, if anyone is selling a Pikler please let me know, we are currently in the market to buy one. **👍**





MULTIPLEX

- redefining parental leave



by **Markelle Farley**

Cost Planner, Multiplex
& NAWIC Member

Multiplex's new parental leave policy has made growing our family alongside our careers much more achievable.

I've been a cost planner at Multiplex for close to seven years and my husband Jake has also worked for Multiplex for six years as a site manager.

We have two children, Eliza who is three and Leo who is now a year old.

Multiplex's new policy includes 18 weeks of paid parental leave for the primary carer and two weeks for secondary carers. Parents are able to choose to take a combination of this leave any time from the birth of their baby until the child is two years of age.

The flexibility of the policy has been key for us, I have recently returned from a year of leave and Jake is just starting his 16 week period of parental leave.

Jake being able to take parental leave is definitely something unique in the construction industry, you don't see many Dads taking leave like this. But because Multiplex's policy is flexible, Jake was able to align his leave dates with the completion of his project rather than have to take it at a set time.

The policy is great in that it enables families to have babies close in age. Leo was a surprise baby in many ways, I had only returned to work for a few months when I found out I was pregnant again. Everyone is different but for me, I was happy to have our children fairly close together to enable me to have more continuity in my career when I return to work for good.

As part of the new policy, Multiplex offers continued superannuation payments and remuneration reviews during periods of unpaid leave within the initial twelve month leave period.

It's really amazing to have that additional financial security, we don't have to worry about job security or missing superannuation - instead, it enables us to focus on being parents and enjoy our time with our children while they are babies and need us the most.

But it's not all geared towards financial support and flexibility of leave entitlements. When I returned to work after the birth of Eliza, Multiplex piloted a coaching program which I was fortunate to be a part of.

The coaching is so helpful and is tailored to each individual - some people may find it hard to let go of work when they start parental leave while others may find returning to work difficult.

I was really fortunate when I returned to work after having Eliza that my coach was a working Mum who had experienced periods of leave and working both part-time and full-time - she was so helpful and completely understood everything I was going through.

This time around with baby Leo, Jake will also be able to take part in the coaching program where we will each have a dedicated coach to help us navigate through any challenges associated with starting and ending parental leave.

We are in a unique position of being able to compare the new Multiplex Parental Leave Policy to the former one and while it was good before, now it's just even better.

It really is a game-changer for parents to be able to take extended periods of leave as and when they need it along with having the financial security of a paid parental leave scheme, continuing super payments and remuneration reviews - all the while being supported emotionally and individually through the coaching program.

The new policy is very holistic and I feel very fortunate and proud to be a part of a company so dedicated to supporting working parents. **■**



The Farley family

A holistic approach to supporting parents that is more than just time off

We are proud of our new parental leave and support offering, an important part of our commitment to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce at Multiplex.

We are inclusive of a variety of family situations at Multiplex and enable parents to balance their unique family commitments alongside fulfilling careers.

So with flexible leave options for all parents and carers up to 24 months, 1-to-1 transition coaching, and super contributions for periods of unpaid leave – our parental leave offering is designed to give parents choices in how they look after their families, and ensure they are supported in the longer term too.

MULTIPLY
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www.multiplex.global
For enquiries please call 02 9322 2400
SYDNEY PERTH MELBOURNE ADELAIDE BRISBANE

HOW THE ACA CORRECTED THE GENDER IMBALANCE IN THE BOARDROOM TO DRIVE POSITIVE CHANGE ACROSS THE INDUSTRY



by Meg Redwin

Executive Director - General Counsel, Multiplex
Vice President, ACA
& NAWIC Awards for Excellence Judge (NSW)

Often on issues like gender there is a lot of discussion and good intentions and real change takes an age to get enacted. In April 2019 I was involved in a change that was bold and effective.

The Australian Constructors Association (ACA) is an organisation comprised of the 20 largest contractors across Australia by turnover. The issues which are at the core of the NAWIC membership are also concerns of the ACA. The focus is on building a sustainable industry by improving diversity and the health and well-being of the workforce, improving outcomes on projects and impacts on the built environment. The board of the ACA is made up of the CEOs of the member organisations and not surprisingly in 2019 the board table was occupied by 20 men. Like most organisations in the construction industry it had been debating for years how to get diversity into the industry and deal with the cultural issues that we all know exist.

In 2019, an idea was floated to stop discussing the issue and to just make a change to the rules: each member company would have two co-directors, one male and one female, and most importantly the co-directors were to be regarded as equal, empowered to represent the entity as the CEO for the purposes of

the ACA and to attend meetings separately on behalf of the company.

When John Flecker, CEO of Multiplex, rang to ask me what I thought, I was excited at the idea and the opportunity it presented. It seemed to me that rather than a lot more talking, here was a practical suggestion that might change the dynamic in the room with an organisation that for 20 plus years had been almost entirely male engineers. If the board meetings and running of the ACA could change that dynamic, then that may cascade into the construction companies themselves.

Of course there were a few hiccups - why were a number of the appointed female co-directors lawyers? The answer was why were so many of the male co-directors engineers? Why were there not more senior women in operational roles who could function as co-directors? Again, a good question to make an organisation ponder - why don't you have a senior enough woman who is in that role? Could you have someone? At the first meeting following the decision there were three of us women in the room and I asked Annabel Crookes, Director, Laing O'Rourke and NAWIC member, who was one of those women what she thought:

"I and the other female directors were determined to make a difference and ensure these weren't tokenistic appointments. Even more importantly, the presence of women on the ACA Board has expanded the perception of opportunities for women - the presence of women on this and other boards, serves as role models to other women in the industry supporting the adage *you can't be what you can't see.*"

The initiative snowballed from the three female attendees at that original meeting and currently nearly every member entity has a co-director. In talking to my female colleagues who now sit on the ACA, the

opportunities are the ability to be able to voice an opinion that gets shared and discussed at a senior level across a range of construction companies and industry together whilst also learning more about areas that may be outside our day-to-day roles. Things which are often taken for granted like meeting a wider range of industry participants has also been invaluable.

Scott Cummins, CEO McConnell Dowell and Vice President of the ACA said to me recently that "There is no doubting that the co-director initiative facilitated the speed of the required change within the association and directly contributed to the ACA's much needed reform such that it could be significantly more effective in its ability to influence the future of the construction industry."

As one of the original co-directors it has been a great opportunity to be involved in discussions that impact the industry and the people who work in it and to be coming together as an industry to make changes. The ACA is one of the founding members of the Construction Industry Leadership Forum (CILF) with the NSW and Victorian Governments looking at procurement and a fairer allocation of risk profile. In addition the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) is working with leading workplace researchers and stakeholders to try and develop a new culture

In 2019, the ACA stopped discussing the issue of board diversity and instead made a change to the rules: each member company would have two co-directors, one male and one female. Most importantly the co-directors were to be regarded as equal, empowered to represent the entity as the CEO for the purposes of the ACA and to attend meetings separately on behalf of the company.

standard. All of the issues which impact on construction - excessive work hours, fatigue, poor mental health and lack of diversity are being targeted and once agreed will need to get built into the government procurement requirements. This work is critical and will only be successful if it reflects the actual reality of the industry. A diverse voice in the room is essential for this to have an impact.

What Cathal O'Rourke, Managing Director, Laing O'Rourke and the current President of the ACA has noticed is that the appetite for discussion and the breadth of issues discussed has increased and he believes we are now seeing more

considered and overall better decisions being taken - ones that have been explored through a greater number of lenses. He also reflected that this different pool of leaders has used their relationships in the market, often to different client and stakeholder team members, which has given new impetus to the board to harness these relationships to drive real change. These additional relationships include organisations like NAWIC.

I recently reflected with Pilar Gomez, Human Resources Director of Acciona, about the experiences she thought being a co-director had for her on a personal level. Her view was that it had given her visibility of topics that affect all players in the industry and that helped her understand better the difficulties and the effort that the different contractors have made so far to overcome issues that we all agree affect the industry. At a very practical level she felt that it had given her the ability to develop her contact network both amongst members and other organisations who interact with the ACA.

Sometimes it is easy to make the big statement that the diversity in the room brings different views. But having been in the room at the first meeting where it was slightly awkward, I think back on the strategy session we did in person in 2019. At the end of a long day of reflection there was a dinner and Craig Laslett,



we *advocate for change*

the then President, invited people around the table to make a comment, or tell a joke or reflect on the strategy. Out tumbled some heartfelt stories from everyone in the room about what working in the construction industry meant to them, both the good and the bad, and I recall one of my male co-directors saying that in all the years of dinners there hadn't been such openness and reflection in this forum and that could only be a good thing.



Pilar Gomez



Cathal O'Rourke



Annabel Crookes

For an industry which can be seen as slow to embrace change, the co-director initiative has been a great success. The ACA is refreshed and tackling significant issues in the industry through the CILF and the CICT and its various working groups. The female voice in the room is just a voice and non-comment worthy. Annabel Crookes and I sit on the Executive Committee and we are getting ready for a strategy day which hopefully will set a course for not only the ACA to be looking at a range of issues and initiatives, diversity more broadly being one of those, but also for each of the member companies of the ACA to take and embrace those discussions and opportunities that us new directors have grabbed with both hands. ■

INCREASED FLEXIBILITY THANKS TO THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC



by Charlotte Nichols & Kate Hannaford

National Services Cost Planning Manager
& New Business Manager, John Holland Group
& NAWIC Members

Times are changing. Charlotte Nichols, John Holland's National Services Cost Planning Manager, has experienced first-hand how the workplace culture in the construction industry is evolving for the better.

"When I started my career in the UK in 1996, the workplace was quite rigid. However, as we have transitioned into a digital workforce, the opportunity to work remotely or flexibly has increased tenfold," Charlotte said.

With a career built on major projects, including the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Light Rail and currently Sydney Football Stadium, Charlotte has never seen a shift in workplace culture quite like the one brought about by the global pandemic.

"We have had to adapt and evolve quickly during the global pandemic and this has seen a shift forward in inclusive behaviours. Teams have had to work as one, tolerant and accommodating of everyone's situation," she said.

Retention of women is critical to diversity and a challenge across the industry. Reconciling the needs of both employees and employers, especially in an industry known for six day work weeks, long hours and uncompromising deadlines, is a must as flexibility and retention go hand-in-hand.

Charlotte sees the commitment from companies in creating sustainable workplaces that prioritise highly functioning, talented people who are recruited for their individuality, not overlooked because of it.

Charlotte is a keen advocate for inclusive workplaces and flexibility initiatives that will hopefully change the way construction employees work. During the COVID-19 pandemic a noted transition to a more flexible workplace has occurred. This should be nurtured.

"The advantages of diversity are being recognised by business and I now work in an environment that is supportive of my flexible working needs. As a mother of three under 11, I am able to be present in my children's extended lives as well as meeting the commitments of a demanding role within a dynamic, pre-contract, cost planning team."

Charlotte is confident of the shift towards workplace cultures becoming more accommodating, she sees the generational shift brought about by millennials and generation Z will keep driving change.

"I see the younger generation coming through, they have higher expectations about the quality of the work/life balance, with a high value placed on the flexibility with their schedules and remote work options and I am very optimistic about the future."

The growth of female engagement in the construction industry has grown steadily since the 1990s, increasing exponentially over the decades. It is important to remember all the trailblazers who have gone before us and for each of us to promote the values of diversity and inclusion by supporting the next generation coming through. ■

REBUILDING THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY'S CULTURE FROM THE GROUND UP

*- fostering change through research-led education of
future construction professionals*



by Dr Christina Scott-Young

Associate Professor, School of Property, Construction
and Project Management, RMIT University, Melbourne

The construction industry has been slow to embrace gender diversity and inclusion and to support the emotional and physical health of its workers. There are examples of exemplary companies that are leading the necessary reforms for an enlightened 21st century workplace where employees can thrive. However, our research shows that there is still a long way to go.

My colleagues Associate Professors Sarah Holdsworth, Michelle Turner and I work in the School of Property, Construction and Project Management at RMIT University, preparing the next generation of construction professionals. As university researchers and teachers, we are attempting to facilitate change in the construction industry from the bottom up, beginning with the future pipeline of emerging construction professionals.

For the past six years we have been conducting research to identify strategic solutions to improve the industry's culture. Our early research took a preventative approach by identifying the qualities that employees require to survive in challenging work conditions. To better prepare the next generation of construction professionals to work in this demanding industry, we have been developing their resilience through the adoption of effective self-care practices. We have found that students who engage in protective behaviours such as managing stress, maintaining perspective, staying healthy and creating strong support networks show higher levels of resilience, better mental health and are less likely to experience burnout. Our most recent study of women working in trades and semi-skilled roles in

construction confirmed that bolstering employees' resilience is essential if they are to succeed in demanding environments.

Our second stream of research is concerned with identifying ways to retain trades and semi-skilled women in the construction industry. To date, much of the research on gender inequality in the construction industry has focused on women in professional and management roles with very few studies on women who work onsite. Our most recent study was supported by a research grant as part of the Victorian Strategy in Construction Strategy: Building Gender Equality. Our research explored how companies can create an inclusive and adaptive workplace to support women and retain them in the industry.

168 women working in trades and semi-skilled roles completed our online survey to assess their perception of workplace psychosocial safety climate, civility and respect, supervisor support, work-family conflict and individual resilience. Most of the participants worked in the commercial sector (63%), with a smaller proportion working in the civil (20%) and domestic (12%) construction sectors. Interviews were later conducted with 43 women to explore, in greater detail, the challenges they faced and to understand how these issues affected their wellbeing.

We found that women's experiences in the construction workplace were varied. All the women we interviewed expressed passion for construction, regardless of the treatment they had experienced onsite. Some had only ever worked in extremely positive environments with supportive employers and co-workers. However, almost one third of the

Our most recent study of women working in trades and semi-skilled roles in construction confirmed that bolstering employees' resilience is essential if they are to succeed in demanding environments.



spaces for women in construction to connect, affirm each other's value in the industry and provide mentoring and training opportunities for their professional development.

Our research revealed systemic issues relating to gender and inclusion at all levels of the construction ecosystem. Aside from having a serious impact on wellbeing, failure to provide a safe workplace for women contravenes occupational health and safety legislation and regulations. For meaningful and sustained improvement in gender equality, we recommend an integrated 'systemwide saturation' approach which enforces zero tolerance of inappropriate behaviour towards women. A system-wide approach is needed to focus on changing the workplace by reducing or removing stressors rather than requiring women to cope with hostile workplaces. Sustained change which supports women in construction will only occur if interventions to address gender inequality are: i. genuinely supported at board and senior management level; ii. targeted at implementing change across the entire construction industry ecosystem; and iii. monitored, reported and audited.

All who work in construction are aware that creating cultural change is a challenging task. Our research has motivated us to attempt to bring about industry change at the front-end through educating the future generations of construction professionals and managers. We have begun to share our research findings with our undergraduate and master's students which is generating spirited classroom discussions. We are using our findings to raise students' awareness of diversity and inclusion issues and to encourage them to become part of the solution. We discuss how as future employees they can join forces with like-minded colleagues to bring about grassroots change at their own worksites. Our aim is that the new generations of construction professionals will enter the workforce eager and equipped to add their support to those already in the industry who are committed to long overdue construction culture change. ■

interviewed women had experienced gender-based harassment, ranging from discrimination to alleged sexual assault. Many women felt they were outsiders and were treated differently to men. Some women reported that hyper-masculine cultures enabled inappropriate male behaviour that was consequence-free. Often there was a culture of silence and women feared punishment for reporting bad behaviour. A sizable proportion of women experienced career pathway challenges and difficulty in accessing work aligned with their skills and aptitude. Many women also faced barriers around managing family responsibilities and caring for their children. A surprising number observed that the only way they could maintain the careers they loved was to remain partnerless and childless.

Women reported a lack of formal and informal support structures, programs, and strategies to support them to thrive in their workplace. In response to this industry gap, a number of resourceful construction women have developed their own grassroots online communities of practice for mutual support. We found seventeen such groups around Australia that are supporting women working in the industry, promoting construction to attract more women into the industry, raising the employment profile of women and connecting them with jobs. These member-led support groups provide much needed



The report, *Women in Construction: Exploring the Barriers and Supportive Enablers of Wellbeing in the Workplace*, was authored by RMIT's Sarah Holdsworth, Michelle Turner, Christina Scott-Young and Kara Sandri. To find out more visit

<https://www.rmit.edu.au/news/media-releases-and-expert-comments/2021/feb/women-in-construction-report>

THE NAWIC QUEENSLAND WOT 11% STRATEGY

- equalising the Queensland building plan



by Radmila Desic AM

Senior ICT Investment Consultant,
Queensland Government Customer & Digital Group
& NAWIC Chapter WoT Committee Member
and 2004 Crystal Vision Award Winner (QLD)

In 2015 NAWIC Queensland invited a variety of stakeholders to discuss and strategise ways to improve engagement with apprentices and tradeswomen, how to better support them and how to attract more women and girls to trade careers. As a result, the Women on Tools (WoT) Advisory Committee was formed and within a year had developed a strategic plan for attraction, engagement and advancing the interest of women in trades.

In 2016 the WoT Committee wrote a white paper to the Queensland State Government proposing several initiatives including a target of 11% participation of females in frontline roles on all state government building and construction sites. The State Government agreed to potentially review the procurement policy if the WoT Committee could develop a strategy to support the industry with creating a pool of female applicants, improving the culture and supporting the existing tradeswomen workforce. As a result, the 11% Strategy was born, which is a holistic strategy focusing on six key priorities:

1. Attracting and retaining women in apprenticeships and traineeships.
2. Developing industry pathways for women in para-professional and professional careers.
3. Repositioning women as employees of choice in non-traditional careers.

4. Passport to Diversity. Changing the industry culture.
5. Industry commitment to gender equality and accessibility to the trades.
6. Recognising the skills of women already working in the industry.

A recent update to the Construction Skills Queensland - Women in Construction Report¹ has seen a 50% increase in apprenticeship uptake since actions from the 11% Strategy were implemented in Queensland. The WoT Committee has reached many key milestones and achievements, some of which are:

- The launch of an online Diversity and Inclusion Awareness training module which was created by tradeswomen in partnership with TAFE Queensland Skills Tech and with input from a Bond University professor and industry stakeholders. We encourage you to jump online and have a go. This training can be delivered as a toolbox session on site.
- Development and implementation of the Male Allies Program, in partnership with emberin, which is an online structured mentoring program for men.
- Development of the Diversity and Inclusion Kit to support employers' recruitment strategies and provide targeted information to female applicants wanting to get into the industry.
- Engagement with hundreds of school students providing them with a range of activities including

1. CSQ 2021, Women in Construction - A Rising Trend 2021, CSQ, <<https://www.csq.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Women-in-Construction-2021.pdf>>

'Speed Careering' events, 'Career Advice' webinars and the ever popular 'Try a Trade' days.

- WoT toolbox-style breakfasts which attract hundreds of participants and who receive industry-specific, current and female-relevant information from our amazing group of industry stakeholders and supporters. We gave away hundreds of freebies such as Bolle' safety glasses, Shewear boots, Eve workwear and gift cards. During these events we have been able to match applicants with employers and apprenticeship opportunities. Our committee absolutely loved seeing our tradeswomen bring their children to these events too. We feel it is important for our children to know that there are great opportunities in our industry for both men and women.
- Supported the Queensland Government's Housing and Public Work's Exemplar Project with advice and resources to help dispel myths and demonstrate benefits of implementing a diverse and inclusive workforce on a construction site.

As the success of these early actions continue to deliver results, we are already focusing the journey ahead with the 'Next Steps' initiative.

NEXT STEPS

Employer Engagement Strategy. The WoT Committee will host round table events with industry leaders to build on the conversations started and ensure the strategies being implemented are collaborative solutions for changing the culture of the building and construction industry. We will target organisations who employ a direct workforce of apprentices, trainees and existing workers to offer support and provide them with the new suite of resources developed to help them embrace a cultural change of employing, retaining and developing women. We will continue to promote and encourage employers to participate in the Male Allies Mentoring Program.

We will expand on the delivery of the Diversity and Inclusion Awareness training to be delivered at toolbox meetings. Provide a state-wide delivery of the Diversity and Inclusion Training in collaboration with TAFE Queensland.

The WoT Committee will host events to support the 'how' and 'why' of finding, hiring and retaining women in frontline roles in the construction industry.



The Male Allies Program Launch



A 'Speed Careering' event held for students in Cairns

NAWIC QUEENSLAND WOT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Heather Russell: 2015-2017
- Laura Madden: 2015-current
- Juanita Mottram: 2015-current
- Helen Paddon: 2016
- Radmila Desic: 2015-current
- Helen Fedoruk: 2017-current
- Penny Cornah: 2017-current
- Rachael Price: 2019-current
- Rachael Kiely: 2019-current (current Co-chair)
- Carlie Low: 2018-current (current Co-chair)
- Rachael Price: 2019-current
- Amanda Nicolo: 2020-current
- Cassandra Rowan: 2021



The toolbox-style breakfasts attract hundreds of participants

We will create a pool of female applicants by partnering with community-based organisations to provide education, advice, support and mentoring for Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) programs that focus on women in non-traditional such as the Certificate I in General Construction. We will develop infrastructure to support linking employers with SQW, and other entry-level training, with female participants looking for work experience. We will also expand the NAWIC Queensland mentoring program so it is delivered as a structured program to SQW and entry-level training participants.

Furthermore, we will provide WoT toolbox-style breakfast information sessions at schools (initially in South East Queensland however, if it is successful we would look to expand to broader Queensland) where industry stakeholders can provide live demonstrations and the female students can engage with tradeswomen and female apprentices face-to-face. We will continue to promote trade pathways to secondary school students via:

- Speed careering events across Queensland
- Presentations at schools
- Participation at career expos
- Site tours (including virtual site tours)
- WoT breakfasts hosted on school premises
- 'Try a Trade' events

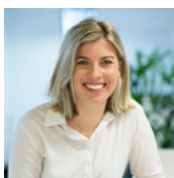
The WoT Committee will continue to expand the NAWIC Queensland mentoring program to include and focus on tradeswomen and apprentices by growing the number of mentors who are qualified tradeswomen, particularly those that operate their own trade-related small business. This will ensure that mentees are partnered with a mentor who can relate to the experiences they face in their day-to-day site culture.

Finally, the WoT Committee will continue to advocate for change and to secure the 11% target on Queensland Government funded infrastructure projects and maintenance work and we will work with other NAWIC Chapters, and the National Board, who are looking to achieve similar momentum across Australia. **n**

If you'd like to register for the NAWIC Queensland WoT Diversity and Inclusion Awareness training, visit <https://inscope.edu.au/nawic>

GENDER DIVERSITY WITHIN CONSTRUCTION, ENGINEERING & PROPERTY

- spotlight on workplace culture



by Emily Harris

Marketing Coordinator, Design & Build Recruitment
& NAWIC Member

The purpose of the Design & Build Whitepaper Series on gender diversity is to establish why, despite the benefits a gender-diverse workforce provide, female representation within the built environment industries of engineering, construction and property is still drastically low.

As of 2019, construction was one of the most male-dominated industries in Australia with only 12% of the industry made up of women¹. More specifically, the majority of these workers were clustered within support roles like HR or administration, rather than onsite or in senior management positions. Meanwhile, a recent Engineers Australia statistical overview report revealed that the proportion of qualified female engineers in 2018 was at 12.4% - down from 13.4% in 2017².

In conducting our initial research to explore these statistics further and how they can be changed, four recurring themes emerged. These themes, according to female professionals within our network, acted as a barrier to career progression and retention:

- Attracting talent
- Limited workplace flexibility
- Lack of development opportunities
- Negative workplace culture

This excerpt from the whitepaper series focuses on workplace culture; the common values and behaviours that underpin workplace culture across the built environment industry and how this negatively impacts female retention rates. We will also delve into the proactive steps organisations can take to foster a more inclusive environment and help bridge the gender gap.

OUR RESEARCH

To write this article, Design & Build used and collated data and interview excerpts from our extensive database of 575,000 workers within the construction, rail, engineering, professional services and property industries. We have also included secondary data provided by authority figures on the subject including NAWIC, Engineers Australia and LinkedIn.

OUR FINDINGS

In Design & Build's survey, the majority of respondents (54.17%) cited negative workplace culture as the biggest challenge they've faced within the built environment industry. While workplace culture can be highly subjective depending on an organisation's values and structure, a few key themes were highlighted in respondents' answers: that their workplaces felt 'isolating' and that they felt overlooked or not taken seriously by their male colleagues.



1. WGEA 2019, Gender Segregation in Australia's Workforce, WGEA, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-segregation-in-australias-workforce>

2. Craneburgh 2019, Increasing the Number of Women in Engineering, One Role Model at a Time, Engineering Australia, <https://createdigital.org.au/increasing-the-number-of-women-in-engineering-one-role-model-at-a-time/>

These findings are supported by a study conducted by sociologist and University of Edinburgh Professor Wendy Faulkner, who found that female engineers at the majority of firms she observed, were excessively visible as women but then overlooked when it came to their technical expertise. Within her research, respondents talked at length about how their competence was obscured by their gender due to being such a rarity in the field. This meant these women often felt the need to work harder than their male counterparts to prove their technical competence³.

Our research yielded similar results with one respondent saying: "Not many women are taken seriously and are not seen in higher roles" while another said, "In this role and others I've worked in, women don't progress and there are often stereotypical jokes like women should be in the kitchen."

In today's day and age, workplace culture plays a big role in an employee's overall satisfaction within a company. In fact, in a 2018 LinkedIn survey, 70% of respondents said they wouldn't work for a leading company if it meant having to endure a bad or 'toxic' workplace culture⁴. Similarly, in our findings, 41.67% of respondents said they had left a previous role (or the industry overall) due to negative workplace culture. This highlights the importance of getting workplace culture 'right' to attract and retain talent - both male and female.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Diversity and inclusion are usually used interchangeably when organisations discuss improving their workplace culture and while both terms are equally important, they are not one and the same and neither happens through osmosis. Just because an organisation decides to focus on diversifying its

workforce, it does not mean that it will then automatically have a workplace where everyone feels included.

To achieve this the organisation needs to ensure it has the policies, practices and social structures in place that foster inclusion and belonging, starting with their values and beliefs - as these are what dictate workplace culture. Companies should carefully assess if and how their values talk to diversity and inclusion. And just as importantly, ask if these values are being clearly communicated and promoted throughout the organisation.

Numerous studies into change management have revealed that all lasting change within an organisation starts from the top and flows down the chain of command. A survey conducted by NAWIC's 2018 IWD Scholarship Winner, Dr Phillippa Carnemolla, found 56% of all participants believed that their direct manager or supervisor had the strongest effect on organisational culture, while colleagues were voted the second most influential factor⁵. Consequently, if an organisation wants to actively change its culture and incorporate more inclusive policies, all key decision-makers and leaders need to have a strong understanding of what this means and what this will look like day-to-day. Organisations should also constantly review their policies and ask their employees for feedback, to help identify key areas for improvement and targets that they can work towards.

Seeking objective third parties to help improve a workplace culture can also be highly beneficial. This could include participating in external training on diversity (which can guide and inform on future workplace policies) and/or working with a recruitment company to minimise the bias that comes into play when recruiting new talent and allow for a more diverse candidate pool. Over the last seventeen years, Design & Build have not only specialised in recruiting within the built environment industries but have developed practices to minimise unconscious bias within their search and selection process and ensure they are providing their clients with a relevant, experienced and diverse list of candidates. ■



To find out more information about the whitepaper series or to access additional support with your current recruitment processes, you can reach out to the Design & Build team at info@designandbuild.com.au

3. Faulkner 2009, Doing gender in engineering workplace cultures. I. Observations from the field, Engineering Studies, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19378620902721322?src=recsys>

4. McQueen 2018, Workplace Culture Trends: The Key to Hiring (and Keeping) Top Talent In 2018, LinkedIn Official Blog, <https://blog.linkedin.com/2018/june/26/workplace-culture-trends-the-key-to-hiring-and-keeping-top-talent>

5. Carnemolla 2019, Girls' Perceptions of the Construction Industry: Building a Picture of who isn't Interested in a Career in Construction and why, NAWIC, https://www.nawic.com.au/Web/IWD_Scholarship/National_IWD_Scholarship_Archive.aspx



2020 NAWIC ACT

awards for excellence

*National Arboretum, Canberra
Friday 20 November, 2020*



Photography: Photox - Canberra Photography Services

LENLEASE CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

Winner: Rebecca Power, Major Projects ACT

Having to go back to work when her daughter was 12 weeks old due to no paid parental leave in the private sector, Rebecca is dedicated to promoting the achievements of women today, to make the journey for women in the future less difficult. Rebecca is the first female Executive Branch Manager of Commercial Infrastructure at Major Projects Canberra. Through this position, she has been instrumental in enabling female promotions while on parental leave and increasing the proportion of women in a government branch to over 40% female employees.

Runner Up: Jo Farrell, Kane Constructions

Judges' Commendation: Elizabeth Nair, Master Builders ACT

Lendlease
Crystal Vision
Award Winner,
Rebecca Power



MORRIS LEGAL GROUP EMERGING LEADER AWARD

Winner: Satomi Honda, Kane Constructions

Satomi Honda is a qualified Geotech Engineer and Site Engineer for Kane Constructions, working on multi-million dollar projects in Queanbeyan and the ACT. She has dedicated her career to changing perceptions and is an active role model in the industry; challenging barriers faced by women who choose a career in engineering. Satomi is a hands-on member of NAWIC and Engineers Australia and is currently a mentor to two young female electricians at her workplace.

Runner Ups: Hayley Bower, TSA Management, Karla Terry, Lendlease and Lauren Kasperek, Construction Control

Judges' Commendations: Monica Wynn, Lendlease and Mikayla Turska, Construction Control

CONSTRUCTION CONTROL CONSTRUCTION BUSINESSWOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Tush Gerebtzoff, Queen Bee Constructions

As the founder of two businesses in design and construction, Tush is one of the only females who own and lead construction companies in Canberra. Queen Bee Constructions has grown recently to include large scale projects at the Calvary Hospital. Tush also provides opportunities for women within her businesses by promoting and providing work experience for females entering into the construction industry.

Runner Up: Claire Denning, AMA Projects

MANTEENA CAPITAL REGION STUDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Ashleigh Johnston, Riverview Projects

Ashleigh started as a receptionist at the Ginninderry project, but when exposed to the construction industry and a supportive working environment, she was inspired to commence a Bachelor of Construction Management at the University of Canberra. Ashleigh has shown continued dedication and enthusiasm while completing her degree by participating in mentoring programs, workshops and construction-based events which has led to her receiving recent promotions.

Runner Up: Alahna Lewis, Manteena

Judges' Commendation: Elaine Guo, AMA Projects

BUILT LEADERSHIP IN CONSTRUCTION AWARD

Winner: Jillian Rheinberger, TSA Management

As a Senior Project Manager, Jillian has led domestic and international projects in the health, education and justice sectors including projects for the Justice Department in New Zealand. Jillian is passionate about diversity, is a past president of NAWIC Canterbury, a Committee Chair of NAWIC ACT and appears on panels promoting gender issues for women in the construction industry.

Runner Up: Skye Roland, Major Projects ACT

Judges' Commendation: Martine Evans, Benmax



Chapter Co-Presidents
Peita de Boer and
Kim Raysmith

Photography: Photox - Canberra Photography Services



GINNINDERRY TRADESWOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Anita Hac, Master Builders ACT

Anita is a Carpenter who has made an outstanding contribution in the construction industry. This includes her participation in the 'Women in Trades Program' and role in the short film 'Redraw the Balance ACT'. Anita was the 2019 award recipient from the Construction Industry Training Council for her dedication and effort in her carpentry apprenticeship.

Runner Up: Melissa McKay, Elvin Group

Ginninderry Tradeswoman of the
Year Award Winner, Anita Hac

AMA PROJECTS MENTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Lucie Hassall, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions

Lucie Hassall is the General Manager for the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions and was nominated by Lendlease for her outstanding commitment to furthering others. Lucie founded the Women in Lendlease program - a female-led network focussed on progression and retention of women within all roles in Lendlease. Lucie has mentored female colleagues over many years, many whom have gone on to take leadership roles within the construction industry and are driving impact and change in their own right.

Runner Up: Melissa Christie, AMA Projects

Judges' Commendation: Tracey Wilcox, RPS

ELVIN GROUP ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGINEERING AWARD

Winner: Michelle Dimoski, ACT Geotechnical Engineers

Michelle is a Senior Geotechnical Engineer and is known for her prompt and precise consulting ability. She is currently working on achieving her chartership and works on many large infrastructure projects across Canberra. As a NAWIC Mentor and NAWIC Committee Chair, Michelle has been instrumental in driving educational courses and opportunities for women in the construction industry.

Runner Up: Rachel Thomson, WSP



Greta Lee Jackson
was the evening's MC

NORMAN DISNEY & YOUNG INNOVATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION AWARD

Winner: Vanessa Brady, Canberra Health Services

As the Project Director for the COVID-19 Surge Centre, Vanessa was integral in the seven-day turnaround on design, partnering with the World Health Organisation. Vanessa's work enabled the ACT to deliver the COVID-19 centre in record time. The COVID-19 Surge Centre can be demobilised and mobilised quickly and was built with heavy duty refrigeration panels for durability and to withstand constant abrasive chemical cleaning.

Runner Up: Ginninderry Joint Venture

Judges' Commendation: Rhiannon Sutherland, Kane Constructions

AON ACHIEVEMENT IN DESIGN AWARD

Winner: Belinda Barnes, Cox Architecture

Belinda led the design process for Stromlo Leisure Centre which incorporated careful planning for future development within the established Stromlo Forest Park Master Plan. Her insight into the history, context, and future aspirations as well as championing the use of Glulam Timber into the design has led to the outstanding design outcome for the Stromlo Leisure Centre project.

Runner Up: Gemma Lingwood, Clarke Keller

Judges' Commendation: Rachel Thomson, WSP

HUON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AWARD

Winner: Kane Constructions

Kane Constructions is a multi-award winning, privately owned commercial construction company in the ACT. Over the past two years, Kane has undertaken significant changes to its management team, resource structures and culture, focusing on two strategic pillars - gender and equity. Through determination and strategic recruitment strategies, Kane has increased the proportion of female employment from 6% in 2018 to 44% in 2020.

Runner Up: Rork Projects

Judges' Commendation: SHAPE

MONARO WINDOWS ACHIEVEMENT IN SAFETY AWARD

Winner: Rhiannon Sutherland, Kane Constructions

As a Work Health Safety (WHS) Coordinator for Kane Constructions, Rhiannon works with both state and federal government, international, residential and civil construction sites. Rhiannon has also taken on a mentor role with CIT where she assists students completing their WHS course.

Runner Up: Courtney Hillier, Joss Constructions

Judges' Commendations: Bridget McShane, IQon and Karen Palmer, AMA Projects





*John Holland Award
for Team Innovation
Joint Winner, Anna
Charalambous*



*Acoustic Logic Future Leader
Award Winner, Priscilla Tran*

2020 NAWIC NSW *awards for excellence*

Wednesday 16 December, 2020



*CPB Contractors
Award for
Contribution to
Sustainability Winner,
Francesca Muskovic*



*Transport for NSW
Tradesperson Scholarship
Winner, Nikki Gregory*



*Lendlease Crystal
Vision Award Winner,
Shonelle Gleeson-Willey*

LENdleASE CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

Winner: Shonelle Gleeson-Willey, Moss Environmental

Shonelle Gleeson-Willey is a highly credentialed leader who lives the values of diversity and inclusion in her extensive work across the global construction sector. Shonelle is a role model to women and men and her service to the Australian and international construction sector is recognised and applauded by the judges. As a company Founder and Owner, International Board Director and Principal Consultant of Environmental Management in Construction and mother to three young children, Shonelle has been a change maker whose actions have genuinely encouraged and empowered women in the industry. She has built a business that emboldens professional excellence, whilst at the same time offering greater work flexibility for men and women and family-friendly work practices, and a positive, collaborative environment with a strong focus on professional growth. Shonelle has used her status to promote and encourage women in regional NSW to take up a construction career and to nurture the next generation of environment construction leaders.

LAING O'ROURKE BUSINESS WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Catrina Creswell, Transport for New South Wales, Sydney Metro

Catrina has made a significant contribution to a NSW-specific program of projects and future pipeline that will have a significant and positive impact to our community. As General Counsel at Sydney Metro, Catrina has legal oversight of the highly complex interdependent contracts for infrastructure works, comprising of over 1,000 project contracts. In a relatively new, unparalleled government agency, Catrina's role in advising a Board of industry leaders on a \$40 billion plus series of infrastructure projects, demonstrates her strong commercial and strategic skills and the ability to be an innovative leader.

Understanding that in a complex environment, a decision or problem is rarely resolved with one set of skills, Catrina's approach exemplifies collaboration which was recognised with her team receiving the highest internal people engagement score.

Merit: Melanie Gholami, Planix Projects



ROBERTS PIZZAROTTI AWARD FOR CONTRIBUTION TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Winner: Taya Kirris, TSA Management

Taya was the Project Management Lead on the planning phase of the John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct. Taya was responsible for developing the project scope and gaining stakeholder endorsement in line with the project budget. Taya's strong problem-solving skills delivered a project scope that is a blend of new build with significant refurbishment of the existing hospital facility. Her exceptional stakeholder management delivered a design that was overwhelmingly supported by the stakeholders and clinicians. Taya also designed and implemented a COVID-19 project continuity plan which transitioned the project into a virtual environment and ensured there was no impact on the project program or outcomes. The iNSW Gateway Review Panel commented that the business case was one of the best they had seen which is a testament to Taya's collaborative and empathetic leadership style.

Merits: Patries Twaalfhoven, Transport for New South Wales, Sydney Metro and Anastasia Koutsamanis, Root Partnerships & Health Infrastructure



MPA AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN CONSTRUCTION, REFURBISHMENT AND FITOUT

Winner: *Christina Travers-Jones, Multiplex*

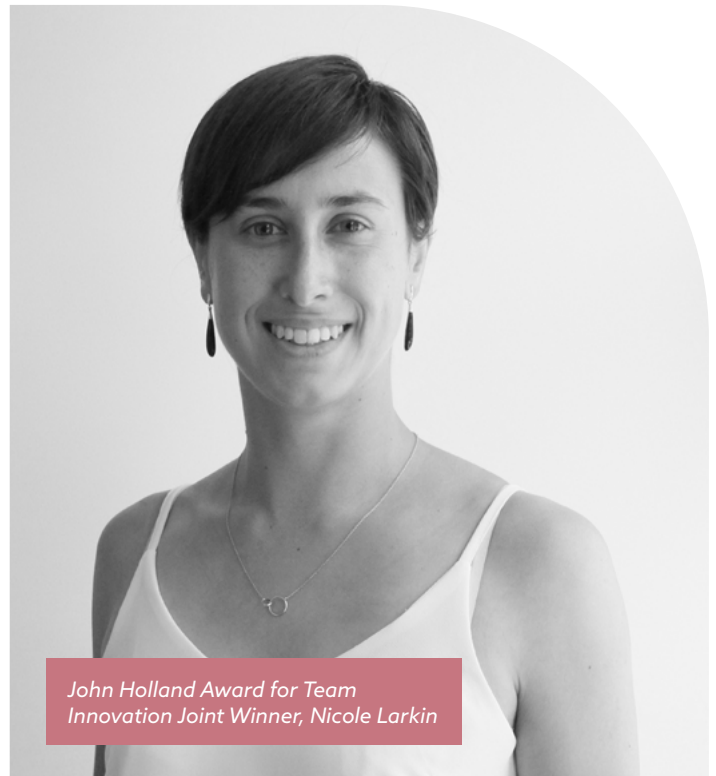
Christina demonstrated initiative and proactive involvement in the complex upgrade and refurbishment of 388 George Street and played the key lead role in design co-ordination, procurement and programming for the project. Christina was integral in the 3D modelling, procurement, design, planning, programming and delivery of the highly detailed lobby, which is truly spectacular. Adding to the complexity of the project was the restricted access constraints with all material-handling required to be carried out through the existing lift banks, which involved precise vertical transport analysis, undertaken and monitored by Christina. As the interface between design consultants, client and site, Christina displayed great management and communication skills and demonstrated flexibility and a proactive approach to managing the challenges around procurement and site operations presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Christina is also involved in Multiplex's Graduate Committee, which stems from her passion to help others and contribute to a better outcome for her fellow colleagues, making her a good ambassador and worthy of the recognition.

CPB CONTRACTORS AWARD FOR CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABILITY

Winner: *Francesca Muskovic, Property Council of Australia*

Francesca demonstrated a depth of knowledge and strong experience of leading change initiatives in her work with the Property Council that will deliver positive outcomes for the construction and property industries in terms of corporate and social sustainability. This ability to connect with and influence key stakeholders on behalf of the industry is key to effecting long-lasting change in sustainability practices. Embedding sustainability and efficiencies across commercial and residential buildings is a huge challenge and with a commercial mindset, Francesca played a key role in delivering policy reform with the Australia National Construction Code that will remove significant amounts of carbon from the environment over the coming years. The construction sector is capable of making a significant contribution to meeting these sustainability goals and through collaboration with industry, Francesca has achieved significant progress in delivering success in sustainability practices.

Merit: *Brooke Larance, Seymour Whyte*



John Holland Award for Team Innovation Joint Winner, Nicole Larkin

JOHN HOLLAND AWARD FOR TEAM INNOVATION

Winners: *Anna Charalambous, Lendlease and Nicole Larkin, Tzannes*

Drawing on their respective fields of expertise, Anna and Nicole demonstrated innovation, sustainability, collaboration and leadership in pushing the limits of timber construction for the Daramu House project. The judges were impressed with the innovative approach Anna and Nicole took to achieve a highly complex, sculpting of timber into organic forms without visible joints or breaks while ensuring efficiencies were gained in the prefabrication of elements and rapid assembly on site. The results of Anna and Nicole's collaboration are an outstanding example of what is really achievable with vision and leadership.

Merits: *Santa Sophia, TSA Management and Lisa Zelinger, The Star Entertainment Group*

HASSELL AWARD FOR INNOVATION IN DESIGN

Winner: *Connie Klonis, Transport for New South Wales - Sydney Metro*

Joining Sydney Metro four years ago at a time when Central Station was at the end stages of reference design, Connie is now the Senior Design Manager for the project where she has influence of the design from a client's point of view. Connie's approach to the design complements the iconic heritage aspect of the building with the focus on the customer experience for one of Australia's busiest stations. The judges highly regard Connie's innovative approach in balancing these aspects with her focus on stakeholder engagement, utilising virtual reality in addition to traditional methods of design. Her innovation in design of the new Grand Northern Concourse Canopy and drive to incorporate sustainable methods adopting lean design, material selection and passive measures were also highly regarded.



Probuild Project Manager of the Year Award Winner, Jane Curran

PROBUILD PROJECT MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Jane Curran, Multiplex

Jane’s management of the Westmead Hospital Redevelopment was a standout for the judges. Jane was asked to finish the redevelopment of the hospital early, in anticipation of the COVID-19 response. Jane’s strong leadership skills and her ability to weave

together the broad range of issues that modern project managers face, led to early completion being achieved by three months. Jane has gone above and beyond in fostering strong relationships with subcontractors, hospital users, the client and other stakeholders. She also drove strong social outcomes on the project, particularly through the supply chain, giving long-term employment opportunities to marginalised groups.

Merit: Nicola Abrahams, John Holland

ACOUSTIC LOGIC FUTURE LEADER AWARD

Winner: Priscilla Tran, City West Housing

Priscilla is the Development Manager for City West Housing, a not-for-profit registered community housing provider. In her role, Priscilla has demonstrated her leadership capabilities in her contribution to building design guidelines, sustainability strategy and submissions to the government regarding proposed policies. The judges were impressed with Priscilla’s use of construction practices to address social issues. The judges wish to congratulate Priscilla on her achievements and demonstrated passion to have an impact on social outcomes in areas of affordable housing, homelessness and community development.

Merit: Tina Zheng, Root Partnerships



TRANSPORT FOR NSW TRADESPERSON SCHOLARSHIP

Winner: Nikki Gregory, Georgiou Group

The judges were impressed with Nikki’s nomination which highlighted her commitment to the construction sector. Nikki’s nomination covered her short term goals which include completing her Diploma in Civil Construction and in the longer term, working her way up to become a superintendent on some of Sydney’s biggest infrastructure projects. The judges also highlighted Nikki’s approach to training and mentoring and her commitment to ‘paying it forward’. Nikki’s referees praised her achievements to date, including being Georgiou’s first female Leading Hand in NSW and across the company as a whole. Her friendly and confident demeanour as well as her visible leadership make Nikki a worthy recipient of this award. The scholarship will assist Nikki to complete her Diploma in Civil Construction and build on her skillset to achieve her goal of becoming superintendent.

Merit: Fatima Bertolini, Planet Plumbing NSW

NAWIC UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP

Winner: Gayathri Araniyullathil Pradeep, Multiplex

Gayathri’s focus is on better environmental practices within the construction industry. She has a passion for promoting a more diverse workplace, celebrating women, indigenous and minority groups. Gayathri intends to spend the scholarship money optimising energy efficiencies and to create a girl’s build club within the industry.

Winner: Rhiannon Brownbill, Nettletontribe

Rhiannon previously won the Australian Institute of Architects William Edmund Kemp Construction and Practice prize and the Billbergia Construction Prize. Rhiannon advocates for Indigenous knowledge of Northern Territory, forcing conversations that drive positive outcomes for clients’ projects. Rhiannon intends to invest the scholarship money to ‘on Country’ collaborators and elders in her pursuit of privileging Indigenous knowledge.

Merit: Minerva Singh, CPB Contractors



NAWIC University Scholarship Winner, Gayathri Araniyullathil Pradeep

The 2020 NAWIC NT Chapter Committee at the virtual event



2020 NAWIC NT awards for excellence

Friday 7 August, 2020



Intract Award for Achievement in Health, Safety and/or Environment Winner, Sandra Howlin

NAWIC CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

Winner: *Kerrylee Pike, HiQA Geotechnical Services Australia*

HiQA Geotechnical is a construction material testing company offering geotechnical services around testing and sampling of soils, concrete, aggregate and asphalt for the construction, mining and defence industries in NATA Accredited laboratories across the Northern Territory and recently in Western Australia. Kerrylee Pike is one of the Managing Directors who has been influential in growing the business from a one person operation to a company that now employs over 30 staff. Kerrylee has enjoyed mentoring women inside and outside the business to achieve their full potential.



NAWIC Crystal Vision Award Winner, *Kerrylee Pike*

INTRACT AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN HEALTH, SAFETY AND/OR ENVIRONMENT

Winner: *Sandra Howlin, Charles Darwin University*

Sandra has made a significant contribution to environmentally sustainable design in the Northern Territory since her arrival in 2003. With a passion for spreading the word, Sandra believes that by educating others, either formally or through community involvement, she can have great influence. Engagement with COOLmob, contributions to a publication *Designing for Tropics*, member of the NT Building Advisory Committee and the Property Council NT Sustainability Committee as well as lecturing at Charles Darwin University, all feed into Sandra's goal to improve the energy efficiency of the locally built environment.

SITZLER AWARD FOR DIVERSITY

Winner: *Turner & Townsend*

Equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of Turner & Townsend's people strategy. In their Darwin office, women make up 44% of the staff and one third of the senior management team. This is a great achievement when compared to the national average of only 12%. Turner & Townsend encourage diversity by removing bias from their recruiting process, by embracing a culture of diversity to promote innovation and business success, by establishing programs on inclusive leadership, by actively addressing the gender pay gap and by utilising external community engagement to showcase the role of women in construction.

TERRITORIA CIVIL AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN PROJECT DEVELOPMENT OR DELIVERY

Winner: *Deborah Brown, Sitzler*

Deborah Brown works with Sitzler as their Handover and Takeover Administrator for Defence Construction Projects. Deborah was a critical member of the project team working on the \$12 million USFPI Accommodation project at RAAF Darwin. Deborah's role was to collaborate with project teams, subcontractors and defence to reach a compliant and successful handover of this key infrastructure project and to ensure accurate and detailed documentation of all assets that met defence's specification requirements. The implementation of new technologies, a never give up attitude and the development of professional relationships all contributed to Deborah's success in project delivery.



Territoria Civil Award for Achievement in Project Development or Delivery Winner, *Deborah Brown*





2020 NAWIC SA

awards for excellence

Friday 20 November, 2020



Photography: Trim Photography



The winners were celebrated at NAWIC SA's Leadership & Lunch event held at The Stables of Victoria Park, Adelaide on Friday 12 February, 2021

SARAH CONSTRUCTIONS CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

Winner: SHAPE

Since 2014, SHAPE has had an unrelenting focus on improving leadership behaviours and capabilities across the business to build an organisational culture where people feel comfortable to be themselves, share their ideas and support each other.

SHAPE has invested heavily in a leadership development program and external measurement tools to support this vision. SHAPE's leadership and culture transformation has led to a commitment to improving female participation, diversity and inclusion with a key feature of SHAPE's strategy being the development of the Gender Action Plan, designed to build and maintain a compelling employment proposition for women.

BUILT GRADUATE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Alexandra Nagy, SHAPE

Alexandra completed a Bachelor of Interior Architecture in 2018 and is currently completing a Graduate Diploma of Applied Project Management. She is currently working as a Project Coordinator at SHAPE, on the heritage

Railway Station Building for SkyCity Adelaide. Alexandra spent the early years of her life living in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and this experience was instrumental in shaping the way she approaches matters of diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of her life. She works with the intention of being a role model and paving the way for other females looking to engage with the construction industry.

BADGE EMERGING LEADER AWARD

Winner: Madeleine Steele, Hames Sharley

Maddie joined Hames Sharley in 2017 as a Graduate of Architecture following her completion of a Master of Architecture and Graduate Diploma of Design (Sustainable Design). She is known as a high achiever in being shortlisted for the 2011 UniSA Armstrong Award in Architecture and a recipient of the UniSA Gavin Walkey Community Engagement Grant in 2017. Madeleine consistently demonstrates the attributes of an emerging leader and her efforts go over and beyond the role of a Graduate of Architecture. This is evidenced by her involvement in a number of working groups at Hames Sharley including member of the 'Champions for Change' - a key policy working group that drives diversity, inclusion and creative



SA awards for excellence

wellbeing throughout Hames Sharley nationally, a member of the Reconciliation Action Plan Committee and Chair of the SA studio's Social Committee which was instrumental in maintaining connection and wellbeing for personnel throughout the COVID 'work from home' period.

MYKRA PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Winner: Winnie Zhu, McConnell Dowell

Winnie joined McConnell Dowell's Graduate Program in 2011 and her determination and drive quickly become apparent. She progressed through a range of roles, from office-based engineering management to site-based engineering roles. Her first six years involved working on large marine projects in the Pilbara for major clients like BHP. Being a 'minority', Winnie fully understands the important role diversity plays in the industry. Outside work, she has mentored graduates and junior engineers via LinkedIn and through the UWA Alumni Network. She was invited to speak at the 7th Women-in-Mining conference in South Africa. In 2018, Winnie was recognised as a 'Next Gen' Civil Leader by CCFSA and participated in the 2019/2020 Roads Australia's Fellowship Program.

CTC Business Professional Award

Winner: Nikki Cheesman-Dutton, Enerven

Nikki has 30 years' experience leading design, construction and maintenance teams throughout the power and construction industry. As Enerven's Head of Operations, Nikki has played a key role in leading Enerven to become a leaner and more efficient business. Nikki hopes to be a positive role model for women in the construction industry. She effortlessly demonstrates strong leadership and decision-making skills and wants women to feel that in a male-dominated industry they can be just that, women. While she admits she struggled with the ability to be herself early in her career, she hopes to break down stigmas and encourage women to pursue non-traditional roles.

SHAPE CONTRIBUTION TO DESIGN AWARD

Winner: Zoë King, Cox Architecture

As a Director of the Cox Architecture Adelaide studio, Zoë is known for her interior design capability on a variety of public and private projects. Her influence is extensive with an impressive portfolio of landmark

projects across major Australian and New Zealand cities including the Optus Stadium in Perth, Adelaide Oval Redevelopment, Christchurch Justice and Emergency Services Precinct and Adelaide Botanic High School. Zoë is renowned for her ability to build firm relationships with stakeholders, particularly around cultural and community projects where the 'hearts and minds' elements of design are just as important as the functional and aesthetic elements. Her ability to blur the boundaries between interior and exterior spaces means her projects maintain an important sense of place and identity.



Chapter President Kate Russo



Shape Contribution to Design Award Winner, Zoë King

Photography: Trim Photography



2020 NAWIC VIC

awards for excellence

*Grand Hyatt, Melbourne
Friday 12 February, 2021*



JOHN HOLLAND CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

Winner: *Rikki Toms, Laing O'Rourke*

Rikki Toms is Manager of Innovation, Sustainability and Quality at Laing O'Rourke. She has paved the way for other women to follow and actively created opportunities for women to excel. With 30 years in the construction and building materials industry, she has been a mentor, coach and role model and driven many organisational initiatives to benefit women and their organisations. These include improving women's recognition within her workplaces culminating in the creation of the #CherBher campaign. This campaign showcases amazing women across the whole Laing O'Rourke business and is based on the concept that women will only aspire to be something if they can 'see it' or imagine themselves 'doing it'. She has also been involved in, and rolled out, many practical initiatives such as the introduction of flexible work conditions, breastfeeding rooms and gender-neutral toilets, to name just a few. Rikki is highly deserving of this recognition for her contribution to promoting and advancing the role of women in our industry.

DOWNER AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AS A BUSINESSWOMAN

Winner: *Jessica Kenny, Johns Lyng Group*

The judges identified Jessica Kenny as the worthy recipient of the Downer Businesswoman Award. Her rewarding career has been built upon perseverance and when presented with insurmountable challenges provided the opportunity to utilise her business acumen, develop versatility in unknown building and construction environments and importantly, lead with respect, courage and resilience. Jessica is commended for her capabilities in applying herself to learn and attain qualifications as an extension of her abilities to engage and influence with credibility. Her dedication and self-application were evident in the manner in which they turned around a failing business, secured new ventures in unknown markets and grew the enterprise's outlook and industry participation immeasurably. Jessica embodies the true essence of the Businesswoman Award.



LENLEASE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

Winner: *Kristine Davison, Built*

Kristine is approaching the milestone of two decades in the construction industry. Kristine has gained experience from across all project phases, with involvement from inception to completion making her an asset to Built and its clients. Recently, Kristine performed the role of Senior Project Engineer managing the services component of works on the complex and challenging live hospital environment at Knox Private Hospital. On this project, Kristine exceeded all expectations in steering the team through the complexity of working in a live hospital environment. Kristine flawlessly integrated new, and managed the major upgrades to the existing services, to accommodate the vast expansions required. She successfully managed shutdowns to ensure the hospital continued to operate without incident. As well as her ability to plan and apply technical knowledge, key to the success of the project was Kristine's ability and willingness to personally liaise with every stakeholder from every operational level of the project team and hospital staff. Kristine proved not just invaluable but pivotal to the project's success. Her innovative thinking gave the client additional floorspace for beds and created alternative work processes to avoid impacting staff and patients.

HICKORY GROUP AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING DESIGN

Winner: *Stephanie Kocovski, Lendlease*

Stephanie was responsible for bringing the design concepts to life on several key elements of the Melbourne Connect project. This involved the highly complex CLT (Cross Laminated Timber) structure, the 9-metre-tall imposing precast brick entry portals and the digital activation of an interactive and illuminated brickwork display. Her ability to engage and collaborate with complex client groups and technical consultants has ensured the successful outcome of these key elements on the project. We celebrate Stephanie's passion to achieve what was best for the project despite the many challenges she faced.





*John Holland Crystal Vision
Award Winner, Rikki Toms*

Photography: Unimpacked Photography



ICON AWARD FOR COMMUNICATION, STAKEHOLDER & MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Winner: Kate Kearns, CYP Design & Construction (John Holland)

Over the past three years Kate has worked with over 900 impacted businesses and designed, developed and delivered over 520 bespoke support measures to minimise and mitigate the construction impacts experienced as part of the Metro Tunnel project. Kate was integral to the success of two key business support initiatives including the Augmented Art Walk and Festival of Independents in Flinders Quarter in Melbourne's CBD in the lead up to Christmas 2019. Kate's dedication and commitment to ensuring businesses were supported and continued to operate throughout the construction of Victoria's largest public transport infrastructure project is truly admirable.

PROBUILD AWARD FOR SAFETY

Winner: Amy O'Neill, John Holland

Amy has shown tremendous leadership in safety during one of the most testing and challenging years our industry has seen. Amy was at the forefront of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic at a site, organisation and industry level. Not only did she manage the implementation of site-related COVID-19 initiatives, she also went above and beyond with her work developing a first class Fatigue Management Program that will no doubt benefit the whole industry in years to come.

SYMAL AWARD TO AN EMERGING LEADER

Winner: Zamaneh Khoshdel, Inhabit Group

Zamaneh is an Associate at Inhabit Australasia where she leads teams providing façade consultancy services to a wide range of projects. Often managing more than 20 active projects concurrently, Zamaneh has demonstrated an ability to think outside the square in providing innovative solutions to the many technical challenges that present when designing complex architectural and high-performance façade. She adopts a collaborative approach both within her immediate team and with the wider project teams including the Design Consultants, Head Contractors and Specialist Façade Contractors.

Not only is Zamaneh passionate about the projects on which she works, she has demonstrated a desire to impart knowledge to future and current industry participants about high-performance façade systems. Zamaneh leads the Training and Mentorship Program at Inhabit, is a regular lecturer at University of Melbourne and RMIT, presents at industry conferences in Australia and overseas and conducts formal educational sessions for Contractors, Designers, Developers and Building Owners. In 2019 Zamaneh established the colLab series, an open forum to encourage conversations, share experiences and contribute to a better built environment.

Commendation: Samantha Gellis, Probuild Constructions



MULTIPLEX AWARD TO A YOUNG ACHIEVER

Winner: Jess Aldridge, John Holland

Jess has risen to the challenge on the Goulbourn Murray Water Connections project demonstrating leadership on multiple levels. Her contribution to the success of the job was not hindered with the additional challenges she faced in working in remote areas, managing multiple projects and local trades, engaging with emotive stakeholders whilst leading a team of Site Engineers and developing a significant design change to meet the tight project constraints. Not only has Jess accomplished so much in her technical role at John Holland, she has also demonstrated leadership in encouraging women and girls in pursuing careers in construction. Her contribution to Engineers Australia’s STEM Strategy and internal initiatives at John Holland have not only helped provide young women and girls insights and access to the industry, but the maturity she shows in her understanding that the decisions she makes at John Holland in their operating practises sets a precedent for opening up the future of construction to more women. The actions of a true leader.

Commendation: Tessa Briese, Johns Lyng Group

ACCIONA AWARD TO AN OUTSTANDING STUDENT, APPRENTICE OR TRAINEE

Student Winner: Eve Smolinska, McConnell Dowell/ RMIT University

Eve deserves the award as she has shown her leadership skills not only through her academic excellence but by promoting and inspiring women in building construction and civil engineering as a President of Civil Engineering Student Association, a President of Females in RMIT Engineering and an Ambassador of Engineers Australia. Eve’s thoughts on Civil Engineering, when she says “Engineering is not only in constructing physical elements but its usefulness to the general population” is appreciated as it shows her commitment to society and their needs. These characteristics show that Eve is a person who can analyse a problem, pay attention to details and accuracy, perform for excellence, is passionate about promoting women in civil engineering and cares and works towards the betterment of the society.

Apprentice Winner: Madelene Pertl, Harris HMC/ Holmesglen

The judges were impressed with Maddy’s pursuit in exploring a personal fascination for the science behind electricity as a mature age apprentice. Maddy’s ability to build on her career while mentoring her peers demonstrates the success of an apprenticeship program and looks to inspire others to follow her path. An active participant in her local community through the SES, Maddy is an exceptionally skilled apprentice and holds a quality asset in always seeking feedback and support to improve her knowledge and skills in the electrotechnology field. Judges and the industry are keen to see her future success as an electrician but more importantly as an industry leader.



George McEncroe was the evening’s MC



2020 NAWIC WA

awards for excellence

*Optus Stadium, Perth
Thursday 12 November, 2020*



Photography: Jillian McHugh Photography





Swan Group Crystal Vision Award Winner, Isla McRobbie

Photography: Jillian McHugh Photography

SWAN GROUP CRYSTAL VISION AWARD

Winner: Isla McRobbie, Jackson McDonald

Isla McRobbie is a Partner at law firm Jackson McDonald, operating specifically within the construction industry. She has over 15 years' experience in construction law. Prior to this, Isla was one of three Principals in an architectural practice. Isla's achievements within the industry demonstrate her success in breaking down barriers for the advancement of women in construction, including being the first female Board Member of Master Builders Australia WA in their 120 year history and the first woman on the Board of Jackson McDonald Lawyers. Isla is an excellent role model for both women and men in the construction industry, with well-honed advocacy skills, a passion for mentoring others and a strong moral compass. Whilst Isla's list of tangible achievements is extensive, it is her significant commitment and lasting impact to the advancement of women in the industry that also deserves to be celebrated.

CURTIN UNIVERSITY EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY AWARD



Winner: Dilhani Jayasekara, Fulton Hogan

Dilhani is the Laboratory Supervisor leading the design of Fulton Hogan's Open Graded, Gap Graded and Dense Graded Crumb Rubber Asphalt Mixes. When Fulton Hogan were awarded the Goldfields Esperance Region Reseals by Main Roads Western Australia, the largest Crumb Rubber Reseal Program ever undertaken in Western Australia, Dilhani and her team designed a binder that had no oils or additives to meet the long haulage requirements of the region. An even greater environmental benefit seen through the use of crumb rubber binder is the reduction of tyres into landfill. Crumb Rubber Asphalt can be reused over and over again making it a circular economy product and a highly sustainable alternative for the road construction industry.

Commendation: Rachel Tanner, Hassell

STANTEC SUCCESS THROUGH DIVERSITY AWARD

Winner: Encycle

Founded in 2008, Encycle currently employs five part-time working mothers (including Directors) and 1 part-time male Operations Manager. For Encycle diversity and flexibility is not just a policy, but the premise their company was built on 13 years ago. Of their two Directors both are part-time, one lives in the UK and both have taken time out at different times to raise children. They have found the benefits of a part-time, flexible workforce and a geographically dispersed team include: loyal and committed staff, staff re-joining the team after time away and the ability to turn work around at breakneck speed. Encycle knows that if they take care of their staff, they will take care of the business, clients, projects, each other and ultimately, the planet.



Chapter President
Natalie Busch

HASELL INNOVATION AWARD

Winner: Dilhani Jayasekara, Fulton Hogan

Dilhani completed her studies in Chemical and Mechanical Engineering in Sri Lanka, before migrating to Australia. She began her career with Fulton Hogan in 2011 and is now their Laboratory Supervisor. Her colleagues have nominated her for her hard work developing Crumb Rubber Bitumen Binders as a sustainable alternative for the road construction industry. This particular binder is a first for Western Australia achieving longer lasting surfaces, enhanced skid resistance, reduced tyre noise and improved maintenance cycles providing enhanced value to the asset owners, and in turn, a cost saving passed on to Australian road users. Through her hard work Fulton Hogan was the first asphalt company in Western Australia to trial the mixes with Main Roads Western Australia and local governments.

Commendation: Hannah MacDonald, Arup

ARUP BUSINESS & LEADERSHIP AWARD

Winner: Anna Broughton, NS Group

Anna is currently the State Manager at NS Group, the largest independent client-side project management firm in WA. Over 14 years with NS Group, she

has progressed from the first female Senior Project Manager, first female Shareholder and now the first female State Manager. Anna was the first to take maternity leave in the company and has since championed the maternity/paternity leave policy and flexible work practices on the back of her experience. Since taking on the State Manager role, she has increased the number of female project managers by 50%, has championed equity in pay across all levels for female team members and has introduced employer of choice initiatives, including monthly fitness activities and flexible working. She is passionate about giving back to the Industry, sits on many diversity committees and mentoring programs and considers leadership to be not a destination but a lifelong journey.

Commendation: Ingrid Jean Harse, University of Western Australia



Peter Rowsthorn was
the lunch event's MC

BUILT TRADESWOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Winner: Emily Hessell, Jason Windows

Emily completed her apprenticeship as a glazier at Jason Windows in 2017. After working as a Draftsperson in the mining industry, Emily sought a more hands-on career in a trade. After over 20 applications for apprenticeships, she found a perfect fit at Jason Windows. She received several awards throughout her apprenticeship - including the HIA Glass and Glazing Apprentice Award - and now manages projects in both the residential and commercial construction industries. She is proud to be a role model in an industry where women make up only 1-2% of the workers. Emily also volunteers with TradeUP at school visits and career expos to empower, inspire and inform students that a career in trades is not only for men.

Winner: Andrea Mahon, WBHO Infrastructure

Andrea Mahon is a Leading Hand with WBHO Infrastructure, currently working at South32's Worsley Alumina facility near Collie. Her passion for construction, her desire to push the boundaries, break down gender barriers and be an inspiration for the younger generation has seen her succeed in her journey from Plant Operator to Leading Hand. As a Plant Operator, Andrea was

responsible for operating Dump Trucks, Rollers and Water Trucks. As Leading Hand, Andrea focuses on traffic management, safety and general site organisational and support activities. Andrea provides a valuable contribution in this role, focusing on providing support and guidance.

Commendations: Eilish Grundon, Axis Maintenance Services and Ashleigh Hiemstra, Merge Building

ADCO YOUNG ACHIEVER AWARD

Winner: Eilish Grundon, Axis Maintenance Services

Eilish is the State Supervisor of Axis Maintenance Services WA. A Plumber and Gas Fitter by trade, she now manages a team of five Technicians, as well as 11 Subcontractors throughout WA at 26 years of age. As an advocate for women in trades, Eilish regularly meets with high school students to encourage them to consider trades as a career along with championing diversity in her own team. This has included hiring mature age apprentices, and mentoring a diverse range of people through work experience who have since gone on to secure apprenticeships of their own. Eilish’s approach has seen significant returns for the company in terms of culture, client base and financial performance. She is particularly proud of their 2019/20 apprentice intake nationally being the first time that an equal amount of male and female apprentices have been hired.

Commendation: Anna Htun, Broad Construction

DISCUS PRINT AND SIGNAGE CREATING THE BEST PROJECT AWARD

Winner: Anita Elson, Taylor Robinson Chaney Broderick

Anita is a Senior Associate at Taylor Robinson Chaney Broderick and the lead Project Architect for the Joint Venture team undertaking the \$500 million redevelopment of the Karrinyup Shopping Centre Project – a highly complex project which she has been involved with since the Development Application in 2014. Anita has been responsible for managing the JV design team’s resourcing, outputs in terms of design, documentation for tender negotiations and for construction with Multiplex, the client liaison from a project perspective and coordinating the design during the build phase under the direction

of the lead contractor, Multiplex. Anita has been nominated by her team for her overall contribution to this project.

Commendation: Verity Williams, Arup

PROBUILD OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN CONSTRUCTION AWARD

Winner: Lorien Dalmau, Probuild

Lorien Dalmau of Probuild has been nominated by her colleagues for her significant leadership contribution as Project Director of the Exchange Project at Curtin University. Lorien leads a site-based team of 27 Construction Professionals including Design Managers, a Contract Manager, Senior Site Manager, Contract Administrators, Project Co-Ordinators, Supervisors and importantly a number of Graduates. In addition to taking an assured and competent ‘hands on’ approach to leading the Probuild staff and Subcontractors, she has been instrumental in engaging with critical project stakeholders, achieving an excellent safety record with zero lost time injuries, ensuring QA processes and approvals are in place and setting the project up for success – even through the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. All while studying for an MBA, which she completed this year.

Commendation: Pooja Goswami, Broad Construction

TBH SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CONSTRUCTION AWARD

Winner: Michelle Blakeley, “My Home” Australasia

Michelle Blakeley is an Architect and also the Chair of “My Home” Australasia, a not-for-profit organisation enabling housing for homeless people. The My Home model is a Triple P (PPP) bringing together government, private sector and community housing providers. My Home began with the simple notion that a major cost of providing housing is the land. In a PPP, the government provides a peppercorn lease, corporates fund the construction of the houses with tax deductible donations and when the houses are completed they are gifted to the community housing provider which manages the property and tenants. The WAPC has provided three sites in the Perth metropolitan area. The houses also demonstrate that quality, comfortable and joyful living spaces can be created on a low budget. The project has taken two years and hundreds of hours of Michelle’s time – all of which is done pro bono.



TBH Social Responsibility in Construction Award Winner, Michelle Blakeley

Photography: Jillian McHugh Photography

ALCHEMY BUILDINGS OF IMPACT

Alchemy Construct is a Melbourne-based construction company specialising in commercial construction with a strong focus on the creation of buildings of impact™, which build social infrastructure and strengthen the communities they serve.

Founded in 2015 by Director Sarah Anne Munro and her partner Jamie Nicolson, the company has rapidly grown with a robust, diverse and energetic team environment and company culture which has proved to be a key part of Alchemy's success.

Director Sarah Anne Munro said: 'We are very proud of the culture within our business and continue to work hard and be proud of the fact that we are well above the

industry average for female participation within the team and for creating a business which is truly diverse and representative of society.

"Our business is spirited and has gained momentum quickly and we know that this has largely been down to a focus on really building positive energy for our employees to work in and flourish, building a diverse team, and for bringing together the best expertise within industry to serve our clients and truly help them achieve the vision they have for their projects. Success is not just a fantastic building to hand over at the end, but pride about the relationships built during and the process of the build."



From humble beginnings just over six years ago, Alchemy has rapidly grown and is now engaged in major projects including the Lifestyle Deanside and St Leonard's Clubhouses, designed by DKO and Solomon Troupe and Stage 1 of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne ACMD - a world-class medical project developing one of Australia's first hospital-based, health-tech innovation centre. The team also recently completed the construction of Neo-Bionica, Australia's first development facility laboratory at St Vincent's.

The company works across a number of sectors including Medical & Science, Laboratories, Education, Health, Aged Care, Sporting Facilities, Hospitals, Schools, Universities, Government, Industrial and Commercial.

Director, Jamie Nicolson says: "It's an honour to be working in such vibrant industries that help to better the livelihoods of those that they serve. We have strongly developed a reputation for going the extra mile, for being willing to work around the complexities of work in these types of spaces, in ensuring that all stakeholders are involved at every stage of the process and importantly in ensuring the build and craftsmanship of all the work we do is something which the client, architect and full design team can walk away and be proud of.

"Our sector is improving year on year, the work of NAWIC has been instrumental in ensuring that we continue to strive for balance in the industry and importantly that female participation continues to increase. Every sector and every industry thrives and benefits massively when we are more equal and when we truly represent society at large."


Sarah Anne added: 'It seems so fitting to be able to celebrate NAWIC's 25th birthday.

Congratulations to everyone involved. An incredible organisation which has supported, helped and nurtured women in industry and will continue to do so for many years I'm sure. With a sister twenty years younger than I am, I so positively see the changes coming for her generation to work in a more equitable and fairer society and I welcome them. I hope that we continue to make change and tackle the barriers that women can face for equality in the workplace and having access to the same opportunities. Well done NAWIC on such sterling work!




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