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The Evaluation of the Victorian Women in Construction Strategy Program

VICTORIA State Government | Premier and Cabinet

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Construction at Melbourne
Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Full gender equality = a world where women and girls take up all of life's opportunities with respect, safety & dignity. Victorian Women's Trust[1]

Overview

In 2018, the Victorian Government announced the provision of '$0.5 million to work with the Building Industry Consultative Committee (BICC) to increase the proportion of women working in the construction industry.' This funding focused on increasing female participation in trades and semi-skilled roles as it is an area that has proven to be highly resistant to change. Based on a commissioned research report and industry consultation, the BICC developed the Building Gender Equality: Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy 2019–2022. A plan of action was developed, and an Implementation Advisory Team was established to oversee a program of work led by different industry parties on behalf of the BICC. The University of Melbourne was engaged to lead the evaluation.

Women in Construction Strategy

The summary of relevant research literature (Heap & Borchard-Burns, 2018) revealed three issues that significantly hinder women's attraction, recruitment and retention into construction site-based roles. Firstly, there is the inadequate promotion of construction trades to young women, a lack of female role models, plus gendered assumptions by careers teachers. Secondly, the industry's sexist culture, level of gendered violence, discriminatory recruitment practices and rigid and inflexible work practices disadvantage women. Thirdly, the work itself can be challenging due to the work's physicality, inappropriate equipment and clothing and lack of adequate bathroom facilities. Women's engagement in every stage of the employment process, from attraction through to recruitment and retention, is affected by these issues. Consequently, the strategy sought to target each as well as leverage change through modifications in procurement practices.

Actions within the strategy included:

- A Careers Day to encourage young women and their careers teachers to consider construction careers.
- The Building Futures website to promote trades and semi-skilled roles.
- A support program for women thinking about a career in construction and seeking work opportunities.
- The development of recruitment standards to promote gender equity.
- Provision of Safe Respectful Workplaces training program.

[1] Victorian Women's Trust (2021) *Our vision*, viewed 5 May 2021, https://www.vwt.org.au/about/.

- Work with industry and government parties to develop model EBA clauses, amend the Amenities Code and develop a Code of Conduct on appropriate and inclusive behaviours and a complaints process that protects confidentiality.

Program Evaluation

The key evaluation question orienting this evaluation was:

> *How did the program actions support the attraction, recruitment and retention of women in on site-construction roles in Victoria?*

Qualitative and quantitative research approaches were deemed appropriate; however, the evaluation adopted a primarily qualitative approach due to the context and timing. Data collection used specific protocols and included key informant interviews, participant interviews, observations, surveys and focus groups, with interviews and focus groups transcribed verbatim. Participants included female school students, careers teachers, female trainees, and industry representatives. Data analysis was conducted at both the individual and cohort level, with qualitative and quantitative data analysed separately and, where appropriate, brought together to produce themes. Overall, the analyses were relatively simple and straightforward, given the sample sizes.

Findings and recommendations

The Women in Construction Strategy achieved its goals. While the original scope of work was affected by the COVID-19 situation, modifications were made, and the intended parties received the various pilot programs well. The programs enacted as a part of this strategy have been beneficial in increasing the knowledge of young women looking to enter careers in the construction industry, supporting those in the industry or encouraging cultural change in the workplaces women inhabit. Therefore, their continuation is supported so that longer-term effects can transpire. The findings for each program are outlined below, with further recommendations included in the body of the report.

The Careers Day

The Careers Day was well received and was, overall, a positive experience for the students and careers teachers who attended. It was well planned, organised and delivered. The hands-on activities, the inclusion of female presenters and informal presentation style motivated and engaged both students and careers teachers. The young female trainees involved demonstrated that a successful career was possible. Due to this success, the BICC should encourage similar events to be conducted in the future.

Key recommendations:

- A series of similar events using hands-on activities and small groups is recommended. This immersive experience was found to be engaging.

- The inclusion of women, and younger women in particular, via their presentations and involvement as demonstrators resonated well, perhaps because it was further confirmation that a successful career is possible for women.
- Further signposting, visual materials (videos and images) and presenter training are recommended to enhance future Careers Days.
- The differing needs of the students and careers teachers should be considered more, and different take-home materials developed for both groups.

The Building Futures website

The Building Futures website launch demonstrated that both students and careers teachers considered the materials appealing and worthy of further exploration. It was referred to as an evolving platform at the launch, and further work has occurred since this time. Young trainees were selected for the focus group due to their recent involvement in seeking construction career information. They found the images of young construction women motivating and bold graphics were appealing. While not explicit, the website was more clearly about construction site roles than professional roles for women. Overall, the website was found to be an accessible and helpful tool.

Key recommendations:

- The website should include more visual than text-heavy materials, more information on different construction roles and pathways, and more Victorian-specific training information.
- Relate beyond school-aged women to career changers.
- Include curated links to further resources.

The Support Program

The program was regarded as beneficial by the women who participated, providing crucial emotional support and career guidance which assisted them to persevere in finding suitable employment. The women interviewed were resilient, had qualifications, and liked the industry, but most could not gain employment or change into jobs better suited to their needs and interests. The plight of older women seeking to enter the industry was of concern as they often missed out on roles to younger women or failed to get the work experience needed to support their qualifications. The program was impacted by employers' non-engagement and the reduced number of roles available due to the pandemic. This program could become a unique scheme in which women gain support, advice, career guidance, work experience, and employment as well as act as a valuable resource for employers proactively seeking female workers.

Key recommendations:

- Future iterations of the program would benefit from increased employers' engagement, including support from labour-hire companies.

- Career guidance around career pathways, tickets and resume building should be expanded in future programs, but this should not discount the value of both practical and emotional support.
- Lack of work experience negatively affects trained women from gaining employment, so future programs should explore how this can be secured so women gain more stable and secure employment.

Recruitment standards

Recruitment practices in construction are more informal than in other industries, which is known to disadvantage women. The recruitment standards took on the dual undertaking of introducing a more formalised HR approach to recruitment and addressing gender equity. Interviews with company representatives responsible for hiring found that while most were supportive of efforts to improve gender equity, companies were not fully supportive of the standards in their current form, and the planned testing of the standards in the industry is supported. Their evaluation of both the effectiveness and ease of implementation of the standards was not high, but it is noted that responses may have been affected by a defensive stance taken to their current practices. The ability of smaller companies to comply with the standards as they stand is uncertain. Companies considered the standards unnecessarily complex and difficult to fully comprehend, with a part of this related to their unfamiliarity with HR terminology, complexity and the number of activities. The potential for backlash or implementation to become a superficial effort was suggested. However, testing within industry, modification and provision of company resources as planned would be welcomed by many supportive companies.

Key recommendations:

- The planned work in this area is justified. This evaluation would recommend that the current documentation be revised using simplified language, modified activities, and better consideration of smaller organisations.
- It is also recommended that the activities/tasks be more precise and accountable and the planned resources tailored to suit companies of all sizes.
- Senior appointments, internal promotions, project-based staff assignments and casual labour-hire company recruitment should be explicitly addressed.
- Staging of implementation or different rating categories may assist, recognise and incentivise companies at different stages of their gender equity journey and improve the longer-term impact of the standards and guidelines.

Safe Respectful Workplace training

The Safe Respectful Workplace training was thoughtfully devised, carefully organised and well regarded by participants and the company involved. The focus on continual improvement in developing the training, building participants' understanding and using activities and case studies engaged the audience and deepened awareness. The adoption of an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) approach to gendered violence resonated well. At the end of the 3-hour training, all

participants understood gendered violence better and expressed more confidence in dealing with the topic.

Recommendations:

- This training is of value, and ways to expand it to other construction companies and worksites should be sought. The smaller group approach and use of case studies worked well.
- It is recommended that future iterations be improved with extra time and expanded training for site-based managers and those directly supervising female workers.
- Take-home resources could enhance the longer-term value of the training.

Procurement

Due to the addition of new clauses in the EBA, women now have greater rights in respect to a workplace free from sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying, flexible work arrangements, and improved amenities and protections. These changes have been enabled through collaboration between the unions and employers (including the MBV). While some of these provisions were previously provided (within the National Employment Standards, the law and compliance codes), these new clauses highlight their importance and availability to those in the construction industry. These changes represent welcomed progress in this area; however, it must be noted that they are only relevant to those covered by the EBA. Therefore, further work in this area is needed to extend these rights to all women in the industry. Finally, the development of the Building Equality - Code of Respect for Women ('Respect Code') and the Building Equality Policy (BEP) are very beneficial initiatives for reinforcing the safety and respect that must be afforded to women in the workplace, as well as providing a crucial framework through which women's representation in the industry can increase.

Conclusion

The Women in Construction Strategy has effectively achieved its goals within the three intervention points: attraction, recruitment, and retention. The original program of work was affected by the COVID-19 situation, and modifications were made to address the pandemic. Each of the actions was well devised and received by participants and industry stakeholders, and their value was recognised, suggesting future iterations could have a longer-term effect on the number of women regarding construction as a place to be and a place they could stay. The pilot programs enacted as a part of this strategy have been beneficial in increasing the knowledge of young women looking to enter careers in the construction industry, supporting those in the industry and encouraging cultural change in the workplaces men and women inhabit. Young women, who had an interest in construction, felt that they could pursue a rewarding career within the industry. When perceived career options are coupled with an increased awareness of opportunities, personalised support and specific actions that address gendered biases, they foster improved representation and inclusion of women in the industry.

As cultural change is a slow process, it is essential that women are supported in their employment journey through a dedicated support program and encouraged to participate using fairer recruitment practices, supportive government policies and industry agreements. It is recommended that all elements of this program be refined, maintained, and expanded in the future until the number of women reaches a greater critical mass. While further revision and tailoring are required, and these are outlined in each program evaluation, elements used to incentivise companies to act would be beneficial to encourage further change occurring in this space. Construction, by its nature, is based on competition, so harnessing this tendency could help drive the industry to become more inclusive and improve the representation of women and other minorities. The success of the strategies signals promise concerning the attraction, recruitment and retention of women and improving gender equity within the construction industry.

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

In December 2016, the Victorian Government launched its first gender equality strategy, *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* (the GES)[2]. The GES sets out a framework for enduring and sustained action to prevent violence against women through gender equality. To further support the GES, the Victorian Government announced, in its 2018-19 *Gender Equality Budget statement*, '$0.5 million to work with the Building Industry Consultative Committee (BICC) to increase the proportion of women working in the construction industry'.[3] This work focused on increasing female participation in trades and semi-skilled roles in the industry. This industry segment has been particularly stubborn to change with 98 per cent of its workforce male workers.

The Victorian Government released a strategy to increase women's representation in construction, *Building Gender Equality: Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy 2019–2022*, in October 2019. The BICC would oversee the implementation of the strategy with the support of an Implementation Advisory Team and Project Coordinator and 'report to the Minister for Industrial Relations on its progress'.[4]

The strategy was created in partnership with key organisations in the industry and included a desktop review of current literature, discussions using focus groups, and the development of three questions:

1. How can we attract more women and girls to take up a trade or blue-collar job within the industry?
2. How can recruitment practices be improved to help more women obtain jobs within the industry?
3. How do we retain women within the industry?[5]

The Implementation Advisory Team developed proposals with defined actions that responded to these three questions. These actions were implemented between 2019 and 2021 by specific organisations on behalf of the BICC. The BICC endorsed the final strategy and actions and oversaw the implementation of the strategy. It was determined that a monitoring and evaluation

[2] Victorian Government, Safe and strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy, viewed 5 August 2021, https://www.vic.gov.au/safe-and-strong-victorian-gender-equality.
[3] Victorian Government (2018) *Gender Equality Budget Statement, Victorian Budget 18/19*, p.3.
[4] Victorian Government (2019a) *Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy, Building gender equality: How the Victorian Government plans to achieve greater representation of women in construction*, viewed 5 August 2021, https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-women-construction-strategy.
[5] Victorian Government (2019b) *Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy, Building gender equality: How the Victorian Government plans to achieve greater representation of women in construction*, viewed 5 August 2021, https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-women-construction-strategy.

framework should be developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy with an independent academic from The University of Melbourne contracted to lead this work.

1.2 The structure of this report

This report outlines the activities undertaken for the evaluation of the Women in Construction Strategy. The report is divided into eleven sections.

- Section 1 provides a brief overview of the report.
- Section 2 offers a background to the Women in Construction Strategy, including its development, actions and program logic.
- Section 3 outlines the evaluation method and framework, provides an overview of each action's key evaluation methods and discusses the qualitative approaches used. An overview of the data collection for the evaluation and its analysis is then provided.
- Sections 4 to 9 provide an in-depth view of the evaluation undertaken for the major components of the actions within the evaluation scope.
- Section 10 provides a summary of the evaluation findings and conclusions.
- Section 11 provides a list of references used in this report.

2. THE WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION STRATEGY: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

2.1 Background

The Women in Construction Strategy builds on the Victorian Government's *Gender Equality Strategy*, which recognises that work and economic security are a cornerstone of women's equality and acknowledges the ongoing gender disparity in the construction industry. Figure 1 presents female participation rates in a range of industries. It shows that construction has the lowest female representation of all industry groups, both in Victoria and nationally.

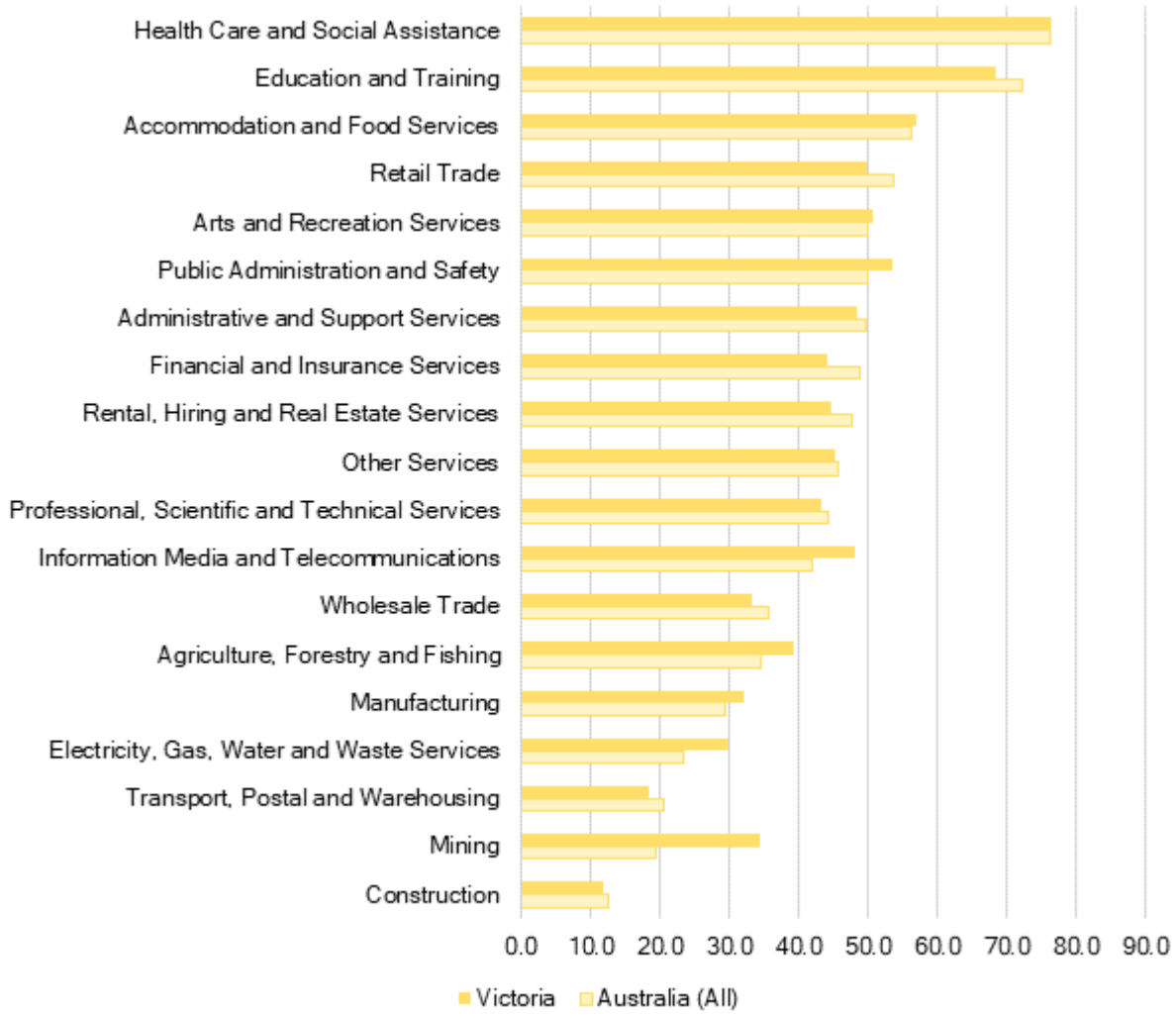


Figure 1: Female representation within Australian industries (ABS, 2021)

In May 2021, an estimated 38,417 women were employed across all construction occupations in Victoria (compared with 148,204 Australia-wide), representing 11.9 per cent (compared to 12.8% Australia-wide) of the industry workforce. The Labour Force Survey data also confirms women's representation was just 0.4 per cent lower at 11.5 per cent in 1984 (compared with 11.8%

Australia wide), signifying effectively no change in the ensuing 37 years (ABS, 2021)[6]. Using 2016 census data, participation of women in the Technicians and Trades Worker category of the construction industry was found to be just 2.1 per cent overall. However, in the construction trades, participation is even lower at 1.1 per cent.

The participation of women in construction trade roles (with nine trades defined by the ABS and Electricians, Airconditioning & Refrigeration Mechanics, or Structural Steel & Welding Trades Workers) within the Victorian Construction industry was investigated using 2016 census data[7] , and Table 1 derived. This table demonstrates the meagre number of women in some roles. Three of the 12 had ten women and one only 13. The largest trade was carpentry and joinery, and while 25,287 workers are men, only 152 are women. Of the trades requiring registration in 2016, women were most strongly represented among electricians (N=190 or 1.1%), followed by plumbing (N=125 or 0.6%). Women were more highly represented in finishing trades, such as painting and floor finishing, than in substructure and structure trades.

Table 1: Percentage of women in construction trades and related roles in Victoria (ABS, 2021, using 2016 census data, Construction industry only, Victoria)

Construction and other* related Trade	Male	Female	% women
Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics*	1156	10	0.9
Bricklayers and Stonemasons	4940	32	0.6
Carpenters and Joiners	25287	152	0.6
Electricians*	17138	190	1.1
Floor Finishers	1884	42	2.2
Glaziers	1357	10	0.7
Painting Trades Workers	9130	405	4.2
Plasterers	6523	75	1.1
Plumbers	19980	125	0.6
Roof Tilers	1233	13	1.0
Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers*	1910	10	0.5
Wall and Floor Tilers	3463	60	1.7
Total	**94003**	**1121**	**1.2**

[6] The Labour Force data is available from November 1984 and provided on a quarterly basis. Estimates are developed based on a sample of the population.

[7] As census data is collected every five years in Australia, the 2016 data is the most recently available. It is necessary to use census (whole population data) rather than ABS Labour Force data as the extrapolation required to the entire workforce is too inaccurate for occupations being considered.

The Women in Construction Strategy is therefore well founded. Designed to '*increase women's participation in the trades and semi-skilled "blue-collar" work*'[8] in Victoria it recognised that female participation had not changed significantly since the 1980s. It identified that women were underrepresented for several reasons, namely:

- Despite increased training levels, women do not get or keep construction jobs.
- Women are more likely to be in less secure and ancillary positions, and this affects their retention.
- The industry does not cater to the needs of women (e.g., rigid work practices) nor welcome them (e.g., sexist culture, gendered violence, inadequate work facilities).
- Informal recruitment processes are common in construction and are biased towards men.

These issues collectively act to impact women's engagement in each stage of the employment process and hinder the ability of the industry to attract, recruit and retain women in on site construction roles.

2.2 The Building Industry Consultative Council

The Building Industry Consultative Council (BICC) was established in 2001 as an advisory council on economic and industrial relations issues affecting the building and construction industry. It reports to the Minister for Industrial Relations and comprises employers, industry associations, unions and government representatives. The BICC, therefore, has a broad and high level of industry representation. This representation and the engagement of those with the capacity to change the industry were considered key to strategy development and implementation.

The Women in Construction Strategy program was overseen by the BICC Implementation Advisory Team, comprised of representatives from industry, unions, employer groups, professional associations. This group met regularly, and the BICC approved all proposals.

2.3 Strategy development

A summary of relevant research, which outlined issues regarding women's participation in the construction industry, was commissioned by the BICC (Heap & Borchard-Burns, 2018). The review focused on 14 recent publications which identified a range of barriers to women's participation in the construction industry related to attraction, recruitment and retention in construction employment. These barriers can be grouped around three core issues. The first is lack of industry exposure, including insufficient promotion of the construction trades to young women, deficiency in female role models and gendered assumptions by careers teachers. The second relates to industry culture, including the normalisation of sexism, gendered violence, discriminatory

[8] Victorian Government (2019) Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy, Building gender equality: How the Victorian Government plans to achieve greater representation of women in construction, viewed 5 June 2021, https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-women-construction-strategy.

recruitment practices, rigid and inflexible work practices and the use of informal recruitment practices which preference males and disadvantage women. The third relates to the work environment and includes equipment and clothing not designed for use by women, a lack of adequate bathroom facilities and the work's physicality.

A number of strategies were outlined in response to the barriers identified. They include:

- Improving the promotion of construction careers to female students and mature-age women, including career counsellor training.
- The use of female role models to promote recruitment into construction traineeships and gender-sensitive apprenticeships.
- The establishment of women's networks, mentoring schemes and media campaigns.
- Cultural change training at workplaces and implementation of flexible work practices.
- More robust accountability mechanisms imposed on the industry, including formalised hiring procedures.

Following the review, focus groups with union delegates, women employed in the construction industry and construction managers were conducted to interrogate and expanded on the barriers and strategies identified. The findings of the review and focus groups were then presented to BICC members or their nominees. This working group was then asked to consider the following questions:

- How can we attract more women and girls?
- How can recruitment practices be improved?
- How can the retention of women in the industry be enhanced?

These questions underpin the Victorian Government's Women in Construction Strategy.

2.4 The Women in Construction Strategy

The Women in Construction Strategy was founded on evidence from academic literature, women and men's experiences, and the knowledge of key industry stakeholders. The strategy identified four priority areas for intervention:

- Attraction
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Procurement ('leveraging change')

The overarching assumption in the development of the strategy is that change is possible and requires the collective effort of employers, industry associations, unions and government to address gendered cultures, norms and practices. The four priority areas provide a framework for redress.

Priority 1: Attract

How can we attract more women and girls to take up a trade or job within the construction industry?

Points of intervention in the Strategy

1.1 Break down the barriers that prevent girls and women considering trades and other roles within the industry. Target points are school careers counsellors, providers of VET and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) courses, and families of students.

1.2 Develop more transparent pathways for women to enter the construction industry and develop a career.

1.3 Establish pathways for women to move from low and semi-skilled roles within the industry through to skilled and trade roles.

Priority 2: Recruit

How can recruitment practices be improved to help more women obtain trade and semi-skilled roles in the industry?

Points of intervention in the Strategy

2.1 Build the capacity of major builders, subcontractors and labour hire operators to attract and recruit women into the full range of trade and semi-skilled roles within the construction industry.

Priority 3: Retain

How do we retain women within the industry?

Points of intervention in the Strategy

3.1 Create a culture of gender equality within the construction industry.

3.2 Provide opportunities for women to create communities of practice and shared experience.

3.3 Map the wellbeing of women employed in trades and semi-skilled roles in the industry.

3.4 Address the lack of amenities for women workers and rigid work practices that exclude those with caring responsibilities (men and women) from having careers in the industry.

Procurement: Leveraging for change

Procurement standards and practices can provide incentives to participants within the industry to make changes in line with the Strategy.

4.1 Use procurement practices to promote gender equality.

The Implementation Advisory Team viewed the strategy as a significant step towards increased gender equality in construction but as noted in their commissioned research piece, recognised that "changing culture and practice within the industry to help women feel encouraged and safe will take time" (Heap & Borchard-Burns, 2018). The stagnant representation of women and the slow rate of cultural change in this area certainly supports this sentiment. So, while the strategy could not resolve all issue, within the time frame and budget, a program of specific actions was identified and allocated to different key stakeholders. These are outlined in the next section.

2.5 Actions within Strategy

Initial actions identified for each of the four priority areas (see 2.3) developed intuitively as the program progressed. The COVID-19 situation in Victoria added a level of complexity not anticipated at the outset of the strategy's development in 2018, both to the program of actions and to the evaluation.

COVID-19 Impact Statement

Measures imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19 in relevant Australian states and territories in 2020 and 2021 meant that many face-to-face and group activities needed to be postponed or modified. Victoria was the hardest hit state in 2020 with Melbourne experiencing the brunt of COVID-19 restrictions. Social distancing rules were imposed in Melbourne in March 2020, with non-essential services closed. Major projects were declared essential services and able to progress with some major adjustments to business and site practices. The construction sector did experience a high level of uncertainty, including disruptions to supply chains, with projects impacted due to onsite labour restrictions and a shortage of materials. Victoria experienced several waves of infection with Melbourne's second lockdown in 2020 lasting almost four months. The COVID-19 situation in Victoria subsequently impacted the original program of work outlined and the timing, type and extent of the actions.

BICC Actions

The original and final agreed actions are outlined in the following tables. These were approved by the BICC. The points of intervention and actions developed had a direct link and were mapped onto the Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy, including:

- Domain 1: Victorians live free from gendered norms, stereotypes, and expectations
- Domain 2: Victorians are empowered, healthy, safe and strong
- Domain 3: As Victorians, we value and champion gender equality
- Domain 4: The Victorian Government is a leader on gender equality

Table 2: Original and final actions within attraction

ATTRACTION	ORIGINAL ACTIONS	FINAL SUMMARISED ACTIONS
1.1 Break down the barriers that prevent women considering trades and semi-skilled roles within the industry. Key target points include: School careers counsellors VET and VCAL course providers Families of secondary students.	In consultation with the Department of Education and Training (DET) create a program and resources that target the gender bias held by careers counsellors, VET and VCAL providers. The tools developed will promote the uptake of trades and semi-skilled roles in the construction industry by women in secondary education.	Career Day • Develop a program and resources for Careers Days for young women and career counsellors around trades and semi-skilled roles. • Run one Careers Day.
	In partnership with industry stakeholders, including employers and unions, produce resources and a public education campaign to promote the benefits of working in the construction industry. The target audience will be families of students (male and female) in secondary education.	Website • Develop website promoting the uptake of trades and semi-skilled roles in the construction industry.
	In partnership with relevant unions and industry superannuation providers, establish an annual structured initiative targeted at men employed within the industry (including fathers, brothers, uncles and partners). The event will provide an opportunity for these men to promote the benefits of working in the construction industry to their daughters and other women in their lives.	Not undertaken due to COVID-19 restrictions.
1.2 Develop more transparent pathways for young and mature women to enter the construction industry and develop a career.	Promote the construction industry to women exiting other male-dominated occupations and industries via promotions at career events, holding forums and building relationships with career counsellors in those industries, for example the defence forces, mining or sports.	This work is subject to future funding. Therefore, it is not included in this evaluation.
	Establish a central contact point for women seeking information about opportunities to enter the construction industry that would include: • How to apply for work in the industry. • An overview of pathways for career progression. • Job matching opportunities.	Support program for women • Create a customised portal for women job seekers. • Register female job seekers and match their qualifications and skills with available job opportunities. • Provide female job seekers information and advice on training, careers counselling, interview skills and resume service to workers. • Provide access to Incolink counselling & well-being services. • Manage employers leads (a provided by the subcommittee) and list job vacancies.
1.3 Establish pathways for women to move from low and semi-skilled roles within the industry through to skilled and trade roles.	In conjunction with RTOs of union and industry employers, scope the pathways for career progress. Provide targeted assistance to women wanting to obtain qualifications and move through the pathways.	This work is subject to future funding. Therefore, it is not included in this evaluation.

Table 3: Original and final actions within recruitment

RECRUITMENT	ORIGINAL ACTIONS	FINAL SUMMARISED ACTIONS
2.1 Build the capacity of major builders, subcontractors and labour hire operators to attract and recruit women into the full range of trade and semi-skilled roles within the industry.	Develop an agreed set of recruitment standards/practices and voluntary (in the first instance) targets for women employed in trade and semi-skilled roles. Undertake a review of current recruitment practices and policies to eliminate the potential for gender bias and outdated notions of 'cultural fit'. Support early adopters/lighthouse employers who are prepared to implement and promote recruitment standards and new practices.	Develop recruitment standards • Study a sample group of employers to identify current recruitment practices. • Prepare standards based on findings. • Develop checklist tools for implementation of standards.
	Establish, maintain and expand (over time) a central point for recruitment matters specific to the needs of women seeking employment within trade and semi-skilled roles within the industry.	This work is subject to future funding. Therefore, it is not included in this evaluation.

Table 4: Original and final actions within retention

RETENTION	ORIGINAL ACTIONS	FINAL SUMMARISED ACTIONS
3.1 Create a culture of gender equality within the construction industry across the workforce.	A long-term culture change program (working title Project RESPECT) designed to end gendered violence and promote a culture of respect will be implemented using industry employers and unions as key advocates. Industry bodies and WorkSafe will be asked to partner in this program. The program will include: • Education on drivers of gendered violence. • Management of gendered violence as a health and safety issue for managers, union delegates and health and safety representatives based on the Victorian Trades Hall Council Stop Gendered Violence training modules. • The development of best practice reporting, response, support systems and mechanisms for people experiencing gendered violence. • The establishment of trained "first point of contact" on sites for people experiencing gendered violence or seeking support. Manager practice standards.	Provide Safe Respectful Workplace Training • Review existing training modules and modify based on feedback from industry. • Develop training modules tailored to managers, union delegates and HSR's. • Arrange for a live test of training modules across 2 pilot sites. • Finalise mechanisms & measures to survey/ feedback participants during the live test phase. • Further structured follow up with pilot participants to measure/ evaluate success (1 month, 3 months) in promoting a culture of respect.
3.2 Provide opportunities for women to create communities of practice and share experiences.	Create (and engage with current) networks, structures and forums for women to come together to discuss their experience of working in trade and semi-skilled roles within the industry.	3.2 and 3.3 were combined. This academic work is not included in this evaluation. Refer to Appendix E for the report summary.
3.3 Map the wellbeing of women employed in trade and semi-skilled roles in the industry.	Support will be provided to assist in the roll-out of the *Resilient Women in Construction* project commissioned by the CFMMEU and undertaken by researchers from the Construction Work Health and Safety Research @RMIT team.	3.2 and 3.3 were combined. This academic work is not included in this evaluation. Refer to Appendix E for the report summary.
3.4 Address the lack of amenities for women workers and rigid work practices that exclude those with caring responsibilities (men and women) from having careers in the industry.	The industrial parties to immediately address amendments to the Amenities Code that can be made to improve the working conditions and ensure adequate access to facilities for women. The industrial parties to consider how applicable industrial instruments and other policies and codes of practice can be reviewed or changed to: • Assist in attracting, recruiting and retaining women in the industry. Establish standards to end gendered violence against men and women and promote a culture of respect in the workplace.	Work with the industrial parties to get agreement on model EBA clauses: • The National Employment Standard for the right for flexible work • A Gender Violence clause • A clause that commits employers to promote the engagement of women. Work with the industrial parties to get agreement to: • Amend the Amenities Code • Develop a Code of Conduct or an EBA clause that identifies appropriate and inclusive behaviours and identifies and prohibits offensive behaviours. • Develop a complaints process that protects people's confidentiality.

Table 5: Original and final actions within procurement

PROCUREMENT	ORIGINAL ACTIONS	FINAL SUMMARISED ACTIONS
4.1 Use procurement practices to promote gender equality.	The Victorian Government places an emphasis on gender equality and the realisation of this strategy when commissioning builds and procuring services from the industry.	The development of a draft Building Equality Policy.
	Industry stakeholders are encouraged to lead the industry in the realisation of this strategy through their procurement policies and practices.	This has been ongoing work of the BICC.

A program logic map was developed to identify the inputs and key activities as well as the reach and intended outcomes strategy (Refer Figure 2). The evaluation team developed this after reading the background materials provided and reviewing the program of work developed. A logic map is a diagrammatic depiction of the relationship between resources, activities and intended outcomes. It is useful in representing the strategy's intent and also for developing more tailored evaluation outcomes. It is valuable when developing propositions that can be tested during the evaluation. In this instance, specific metrics were not attached to the various activities as most were considered pilot schemes. If specific activities are replicated, it is suggested tailored performance measures be developed.

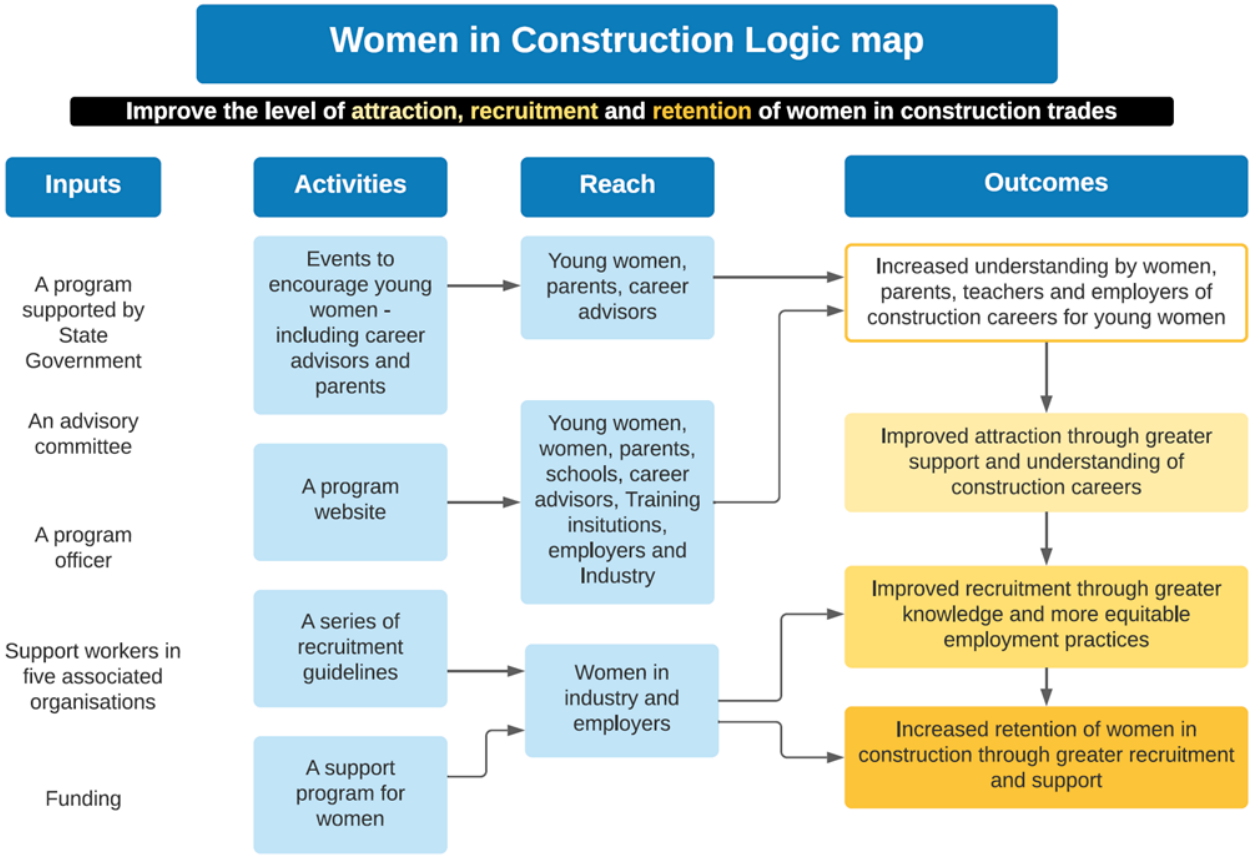


Figure 2: Program Logic

The program logic depicts the logical relationships between program variables. At its foundation, a program logic is a model of how the program is expected to work, the causal relationship between an intervention and the desired change (Funnell & Rogers, 2011). This program logic outlines the components of the Women in Construction Strategy. Inputs can be understood as the resources needed to facilitate program activities. In this context, this involves appropriate staffing and funding to support activity delivery. Five key pilot projects have been identified as means of improving the level of attraction, recruitment and retention of women in construction trades. These include a Careers Day, a program website, the development of recruitment guidelines, safe and respectful workplace training and a support program for women in the industry and employers. The participants reached by this program include young women, parents, careers advisors, training institution professionals, construction industry employers, and women currently employed in the industry. The short-term outcomes of the program include an increased understanding of construction career options by young women, more equitable recruitment practices, a greater understanding of safety and respect at work by industry leaders and employees, and further support given to women in the industry. In turn, the longer-term outcomes include increased attraction, recruitment and retention of women. This program logic is underpinned by theoretical assumptions that link program activities to short and long-term outcomes. Namely, that increased knowledge and support will lead to increased representation of women in the construction industry.

3. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

3.1 Evaluation purpose and objectives

The objective of this impact evaluation was to understand what women and industry thought of the program and provide input, in the form of recommendations, for future programs of work (Bamberger et al., 2010). The intended users of this evaluation are the BICC, other Victorian government stakeholders and industry leaders (Patton, 2008). The evaluation of any program of actions is essential to ensure outcomes are identified, any unintended consequences acknowledged and to differentiate, if applicable, which actions have yielded "better" outcomes so they can be continued, expanded or modified in the future.

The key evaluation question orienting this evaluation was:

"How did the program actions support the attraction, recruitment and retention of women in on site-construction roles in Victoria?"

In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions were addressed:

1. How were the actions within the program undertaken?
2. What were the outcomes of the actions, and how did these match the intended outcomes?
3. What recommendations could be made to the program to yield improved outcomes in the future?

The first question focused on program relevance and coherence and looked at how the program components contribute to increased attraction, recruitment and retention of women in the industry. It asks whether the intervention is doing the right things and how well they fit with the context (OECD, 2021). The second question considered the impact of these program activities; the difference made by the programs, both intended and unintended, positive and negative. Looking at impact sought to identify the broader social effects of the programs. This involved analysing any enduring changes in systems and norms, including any effects on gender equality, for example (OECD, 2021). Finally, the third question identifies recommendations for future iterations, which would contribute to the long-term sustainability of outcomes in future programs.

3.2 Evaluation methodology and methods

Overview

As this evaluation included a multidimensional program of work, a single methodological approach to the evaluation would not have been adequate. Therefore, elements of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were deemed appropriate (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). This evaluation, therefore, used singular or mixed methods

approach but, due to the context and timing of the evaluation, a primarily qualitative approach was adopted.

- Qualitative methods were the dominant methods used to understand better the reasons for the achievement or non-achievement of specific strategies and to identify recommendations for future work. Quantitative methods were used to quantify use or perceptions and verify viewpoints (Creswell & Clark, 2017). A mixed methods approach was used, where appropriate, as it can lead to a better understanding than either qualitative or quantitative approaches alone (Palinkas et al., 2011).

Since this evaluation explores perceptions and understanding of actions undertaken as part of the Women in Construction strategy, the core qualitative component best addressed the evaluation's purpose. More weight has therefore been assigned to the data coming from the qualitative components in this evaluation. The evaluation was underpinned by a pragmatic paradigm (or worldview), a problem-orientated philosophy for exploring real-world situations.

The primary evaluation methods are summarised in Tables 6 to 9 and are discussed further in sections 4 to 9.

Table 6: Attraction actions and evaluation method

ATTRACTION	ACTIONS	KEY EVALUATION METHOD
1.1 Break down the barriers that prevent women considering trades and semi-skilled roles within the industry. Key target points include: School careers counsellors VET and VCAL course providers Families of secondary students	Career Day • Develop a program and resources for Careers Days for young women and career counsellors around trades and semi-skilled roles. • Run one Careers Day.	Primary Observations Secondary Interviews Participant Survey
	Website • Develop website promoting the uptake of trades and semi-skilled roles in the construction industry.	Primary Focus Group Secondary Interviews Participant Survey
1.2 Develop more transparent pathways for young and mature women to enter the construction industry and develop a career.	Support program for women job seekers • Create a customised portal for women job seekers. • Register female job seekers and match their qualifications and skills with available job opportunities. • Provide female job seekers information and advice on training, careers counselling, interview skills and resume service to workers. • Provide access to Incolink counselling & well-being services. • Manage employers leads (a provided by the subcommittee) and list job vacancies.	Primary Interviews

Table 7: Recruitment actions and evaluation method

RECRUITMENT	ACTIONS	KEY EVALUATION METHOD
2.1 Build the capacity of major builders, subcontractors and labour hire operators to attract and recruit women into the full range of trade and semi-skilled roles within the industry.	Develop recruitment standards • Study a sample group of employers to identify current recruitment practices. • Prepare standards based on findings. • Develop checklist tools for implementation of standards.	Primary Interviews Secondary Document analysis

Table 8: Retention actions and evaluation method

RETENTION	ACTIONS	KEY EVALUATION METHOD
3.1 Create a culture of gender equality within the construction industry across the workforce.	Provide Safe Respectful Workplace Training • Review existing training modules and modify based on feedback from industry. • Develop training modules tailored to managers, union delegates and HSR's. • Arrange for a live test of training modules across 2 pilot sites. • Finalise mechanisms & measures to survey/ feedback participants during the live test phase. • Further structured follow up with pilot participants to measure/ evaluate success (1 month, 3 months) in promoting a culture of respect.	Primary Observations Secondary Interviews Participant Survey
3.4 Address the lack of amenities for women workers and rigid work practices that exclude those with caring responsibilities (men and women) from having careers in the industry.	Work with the industrial parties to get agreement on model EBA clauses: • The National Employment Standard for the right for flexible work • A Gender Violence clause • A clause that commits employers to promote the engagement of women Work with the industrial parties to get agreement to: • Amend the Amenities Code. • Develop a Code of Conduct or an EBA clause that identifies appropriate and inclusive behaviours and identifies and prohibits offensive behaviours. • Develop a complaints process that protects people's confidentiality.	Primary Interviews Secondary Document analysis

Table 9: Procurement actions and evaluation

PROCUREMENT	ACTIONS	KEY EVALUATION METHOD
4.1 Use procurement practices to promote gender equality.	The Victorian Government places an emphasis on gender equality and the realisation of this strategy when commissioning builds and procuring services from the industry. Industry stakeholders are encouraged to lead the industry in the realisation of this strategy through their procurement policies and practices.	Report actions and include documentation developed.

Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods were the primary methodology adopted for the evaluation. These included interviews, observations and focus groups. Where deemed suitable, these were supplemented with some quantitative methods in the form of feedback surveys, which gauged issues such as agreement, ease of implementation etc. as well as system analytics (where available) which identified number of times accessed etc. These primary qualitative methods are discussed in general below.

Interviews

Interviews are the most common method of data collection deployed in qualitative research. Interviews typically comprise of open-ended questions, giving the participants the flexibility to answer questions in a way that highlights the issues/ideas/perceptions/thoughts that are most important to them (King, Horrocks & Brooks, 2019). This leads to rich, exploratory data and insights that the researcher may not have anticipated ahead of time (Stuckey, 2013). Interviews also allow the researcher the flexibility to probe the participant responses to ask the "why" and "how" aspects (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Interviews also allow for the researcher to build a rapport with the participants, allowing the researcher to often get responses to questions that may not have been answered in a survey (Roulston & Choi, 2018).

There are primarily three types of interviews varying in terms of the degree of structure of the interview questions (Stuckey, 2013). First, structured interviews follow a strict protocol – the researcher follows a specific set of questions in a pre-determined order. These are more helpful when there are a large number of participants and common themes need to be identified across a large corpus of interview data. With fewer participants and an exploratory study, non-structured interviews or narrative interviews may be used. These allow the participant to relay their life story, with very few probes or questions from the researcher. However, it is the third type of interviews - semi-structured interviews that are most often used in qualitative studies. These are the interviews that have been used for this evaluation. Semi-structured interviews have a set of pre-determined questions, but the interview's direction is guided by the participants' responses.

In this evaluation, semi-structured interviews have been used for the following:

1. To get information on the Women in Construction Strategy planned program, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the organisers of those events. These are also referred to as key informant interviews. These key informant interviews, included for instance, the CFMMEU organisers of the Careers Day, the developers of the Master Builders Association Victoria (MBV) recruitment standards, the coordinator of the Incolink web portal, and so on.
2. To get feedback from the intended targets of the planned activities (participants of a program, users of a certain resource, etc.), semi-structured interviews were carried out. This helped us to understand their experiences, evaluate these against the intended deliverables, and highlight the lessons learned for future iterations.

Interview protocols were developed and were based on an in-depth literature review to identify the key areas of inquiry. During the interviews, probes and prompts were used to elicit greater details about some of the responses (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019). These interviews were conducted virtually, over Zoom or telephone, and were recorded with the participants' permission.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. In an inductive, emergent research design, the transcriptions and researcher's notes about the interview process (body language, expressions, eye contact, etc.) were analysed using principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Data collection and analysis were done iteratively to yield rich insights that prioritised the participants' voices.

Observations

Observation is one of the oldest and most fundamental research methods in qualitative research. "This approach involves collecting data using one's senses, especially looking and listening in a systematic and meaningful way" (McKenchnie, 2008, page 573). Marshall and Rossman (1989) define it as the "systematic description of events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (page 79). Observations enable the researcher to describe an event/interaction/situation as it unfolds in the form of a "written photograph" (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Observing a particular situation provides researchers to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study. They can check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine the nature of interactions, including any communication norms, make a note of the frequency of communication, gauge interest level, and so on (Schmuck, 1997). Therefore, this method was used to collect data on days that certain events were scheduled – for instance Careers Day and Respectful Workplace Training.

Observation protocols were developed based on the main aims of the study, the key evaluation questions, and insights from the scientific literature. These protocols acted as a road map for the researchers – detailing the aims of the study, the chronological order of events for the day, key aspects to observe, etc. This provided a good starting point for the researchers, while the actual

observations guided the process thereafter. "Where to begin looking depends on the research question, but where to focus or stop action cannot be determined ahead of time" (Merriam, 1998, page 97). Two observers were present at every observation site to ensure that the observing researcher did not miss observing a critical event or interaction and get a more rounded perspective (different observation lenses).

Focus group

A focus group is a qualitative research method that allows for bridging scientific research and local knowledge. It allows researchers to gather data in an interactive setting where participants are asked open-ended questions and encouraged to discuss their thoughts freely with other participants. This kind of interaction typically generates new ideas and is ideally suited for enhancing a resource, product, or service targeted at a key demographic group. Therefore, it was well suited for this evaluation to provide the kind of learning and feedback sought. Research indicates that the ideal size of the group of participants is 8-10 so that the discussion can be moderated and yet yield different ideas. This method was used to collect data for the website evaluation.

Sampling method and sample description

In-depth interviews, observations and focus groups formed the primary data collection methods. The quantitative data obtained in larger forums, such as the Careers Day, formed a supplemental component that benefits the evaluation. The samples for the evaluation were purposefully selected to yield "information rich" data (Patton, 2002). A number of different participants from various settings and organisations informed this evaluation. These are outlined below.

Most participants were over 18 years of age, with industry representatives from 30 to 65 years of age. The only exception to this was the female school students who attended the Careers Day aged between 16 and 18. They were accompanied at all times by a careers teachers/careers counsellors from their school. The number of participants was above the minimum sample size guidance for case studies (Creswell, 2002), interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) and focus groups (Krueger, 2000).

Data collection

For collecting the data, qualitative and quantitative instruments were employed at multiple data collection points. An overview of these instruments has been provided in Table 10.

Table 10: Data Collection for Evaluation

Program	Data collection instrument
Careers Day	1. Interview with program organisers
	2. Observations Primary focus • Female school students • Career teachers
	3. Participant feedback surveys Primary focus • Female school students • Careers teachers
Website	1. Interviews with program organisers and web development team
	2. Participant feedback surveys Primary focus • Female school students • Careers teachers
	3. Focus group Primary focus • Young female trainees
Support Program	1. Interviews with program organisers
	2. Interviews with women in program
Recruitment standards	1. Interviews with program organisers
	2. Interviews with industry representatives involved in company's recruitment decisions
Respectful Workplace Training	1. Interview with program organisers and company representative
	2. Observations Primary focus • Head contractor staff
	3. Participant feedback surveys Primary focus • Head contractor staff
EBA clauses, amenities and procurement	Interview with program organisers • Report outcomes

Data analysis.

The analysis in this study will be conducted at the individual level, cohort level, as well as group level. Traditionally, as noted by Creswell and Clark (2017), "Data analysis in mixed methods

research consists of analysing the quantitative data using quantitative methods and the qualitative data using qualitative methods" (page 128). Qualitative and quantitative data will be analysed separately and, where appropriate, brought together to produce findings/themes/results that are robust and answer the evaluation questions.

All the interviews and focus groups will be transcribed, and these along with the researcher's notes about the interviews, observations or focus group will be brought together. They will be analysed using principles of thematic analysis. Due to the small sample size, only simple descriptive statistics will be used to analyse the feedback data. Any open-ended responses will be analysed in a process similar to qualitative data analysis. Overall, the analyses will be quite simple and straight-forward, given the sample size.

Limitations

This evaluation relied on a range of methods and sources of data. Some limitations need to be acknowledged. Smaller sample sizes in qualitative evaluation methods are fundamental to this mode of inquiry, but they were smaller than ideal in some elements of this evaluation. Some of this related to the activity itself as well as the ability to engage a larger sample. For instance, the Respectful Workplace Training event and the Careers Day only involved a limited number of participants. Despite significant efforts by the evaluation team, a larger sample could not be obtained for the evaluation of the Support Program and the Recruitment Standards. However, some data saturation was witnessed when no new themes emerged within these samples, suggesting that further data collection would not have yielded significantly different results.

Also, the samples were not always randomly selected. Firstly, individuals have chosen to participate, and in some cases, the participants have been suggested by those involved. However, efforts were made to reduce any bias. For example, the responses from provided and evaluator sourced participants were compared, and few differences were detected. The interview protocols were structured to enquire from different viewpoints. The focus group was structured so that participants considered the information they valued before looking at the website. The information gleaned from the observations, interviews, and focus groups were rich and helpful in exploring responses to the program.

4. CAREERS DAY

4.1 Overview

ACTIONS

Career Day

- Develop a program and resources for a Careers Day for young women and career counsellors around trades and semi-skilled roles.
- Run one Careers Day.

The Careers Day was part of the attraction aspect of the strategy. It was designed to promote the construction industry as a viable careers pathway for women and attract young women to the building and construction trades. The audience was career counsellors and secondary female school students. The CFMMEU and ETU led this work on behalf of the BICC. It was considered a pilot, which may be replicated in the future.

OVERALL FINDING

The pilot Careers Day was successful, and the BICC should encourage future events to be conducted. The immersive approach with hands-on activities and an informal presentation style should continue as these motivate and engage both students and careers teachers. Including women, and younger women in particular, on the day through their "life stories" from working in the industry and as demonstrators or part of training activities increased students' engagement and demonstrated a successful career was possible. The inclusion of more signposting, visual materials and presenter training is encouraged. Further recommendations are included at the end of this section.

4.2 Evaluation approach

Background

Holding a career day can provide students with the information necessary to decide whether they would like an occupation and teachers with more information on various roles (Kaskey, 2012). Hands-on activities engage students and help them better understand a real construction environment (Jeffers et al., 2004; Hegazy, 2013). A career day with hands-on activities is helpful as it can introduce students to the tools of that trade and give them a more realistic feel for the work performed by that trade (Chicago Women in Trades, 2021). Abdullah (2011) illustrated how hands-on experience in a design-build course influenced learning and was a positive experience for students.

Methods

Three methods were adopted to collate the evaluation data relating to the Careers Day event. These included key informant interviews, observations and participant feedback. Two CFMMEU staff members were interviewed prior to the event in order to understand more about the development of the program for the Careers Day. An interview protocol was developed, which primarily focused on the planning and organisation of the event. In particular, the following areas were explored:

- How the program was devised and how this was expected to assist students and career counsellors
- How participants would be selected
- Any challenges faced in organising the event

Both observations and feedback surveys were used to understand more about the Careers Day itself. The observations were undertaken by two experienced researchers, and a standard protocol was developed. This protocol focused on:

- Organisation, including arrivals, transitioning through the events, etc.
- Quality of information presented in terms of clarity, the complexity of information, requests for more/different information, and audience comprehension
- Level of interest by participants such as asking questions, taking part in activities or body language

Separate participant feedback surveys were developed for students, careers teachers and other observers. A sample of these is included in the appendix. These ascertained:

- How they heard about the day and their motivation for attending
- Participant perceptions of the day (e.g., how useful, helpful, motivating etc., learning something new etc.)
- Their thoughts on any program changes, whether they would recommend such an event to others and interest in attending similar events in the future
- The popularity of the different career stations

4.3 Development of the pilot Careers Day

Participants

Two CFMMEU staff members were interviewed before the event. It was apparent that both were very committed to increasing the number of women coming into the industry. In particular, one staff member was a firm advocate for women in construction and had a deep understanding of training and employment issues for women. The other managed the training unit and had an

excellent understanding of construction training, particularly in high-risk work, which is the focus of the CFMMEU training centre.

Drivers for the Careers Day

It was revealed during the interviews that one of the drivers for the Careers Day was feedback the CFMMEU had obtained from older women who had noted their lack of exposure to trades at school and their subsequent direction into 'feminised' industries. As a staff member stated:

> *Older women we engage with very often say that they wish they had done more when they were at school, they had indicated that they wanted, you know, to consider occupations, working with their hands, but got directed into feminised industries of work.*

Both CFMMEU staff expressed concern that knowledge of construction careers is not high, and in fact, "even the boys don't have a lot of knowledge about the variety of careers in the construction industry". In addition, one noted that "there just isn't enough information there for careers teachers to provide good guidance to young people on careers in the industry - much less than break down some of those biases". One staff member referred to prior research on the role career counsellors play in assisting school students to careers they regard as suitable and the need to overcome any biases. The focus of the day was to inform and inspire both career counsellors (aka careers teachers) and young women about opportunities within the construction industry.

Program design

One of the key components driving the day's design was to ensure participants, and young women, in particular, were:

- Exposed to a wide range of opportunities in construction
- Received some hands-on experience
- Left the event enthusiastic about possibilities within the industry

An immersive educational approach was deemed the most suitable approach and adopted in the design of the day's main activities. This technique was well understood within the CFMMEU Education and Training Centre and had been successfully adopted in many training programs. Both staff members considered that this approach would provide a more lasting experience and expose the students and teachers to a range of occupational choices. It was decided, where possible, that participants would do some activities. If this was not deemed safe, they would be given the opportunity to watch others undertaking simulated industry experiences. In addition, they would have the opportunity to talk to trainers or students throughout the day.

The program was designed to include some introductory talks by two training staff members and a young woman working in the industry. One staff member would focus on different trades, pathways and job expectations (sectors and pay rates). The other would explain different labouring classes, high risk work qualifications and pay. One would be male and the other female

to demonstrate a greater gender balance than would typically occur. The younger woman was selected as a role model for the school students - being younger and currently undertaking training would be a key factor in her selection. The CFMMEU staff member said this was based on the premise "be what you can see". After the introductory session, students and their careers teachers would then be exposed to several career stations located across the Training unit site. Five career stations were identified, and these related to areas taught within the training unit. These included:

- Carpentry
- Forklift
- Scaffolding
- Cranes
- Asbestos removal

The first listed area was what would be regarded as a typical well-known trade within construction. The others were related to high-risk construction work areas that require separate qualifications (often referred to as tickets). These high-risk occupations are a speciality of the CFMEU Education and Training Centre in Port Melbourne. The stations were located where training is usually undertaken. These are spread across the whole training unit site, which would expose the students to the roles and the training facilities themselves. It was decided that the careers teacher would accompany the student from the same school and experience the same activities/materials. This would provide familiarity for the student and address concerns relating to students being less than 18 years of age. Groups were structured to be small and adequately staffed by CFMMEU personnel to address individual questions or concerns. The groups would rotate through each of the five career stations to accommodate COVID-19 space restrictions. Where possible, students would have some hands-on experience.

The day would finish with lunch to allow for informal chat and feedback survey completion. The student would be given some resources to take home that the CFMMEU would collate. The nature of these had not been finalised at the time of the interview. The day would act as a pilot to future events. A high level of interest from the schools contacted was mentioned several times.

Identifying Careers Day participants

The training unit noted that they currently run programs within about 70 schools in Victoria and provide services like occupational health and safety induction and white card training to Victorian secondary school students, particularly those in VCAL, VET in school, or undertaking work experience. They were very aware that female participation in these events has been relatively low.

Using these contacts and liaising with the Australian Education Union, they identified and targeted around 20 schools in the Melbourne metropolitan and inner regional area. The event was limited to 15 female students and 15 career counsellors. The COVID-19 situation, the scheduled training

and the immersive nature of the experience limited the number of participants who could be involved. This restriction on numbers was to ensure the event would be meaningful and manageable in a 'live' training environment.

Program for the Careers Day

The program for the day, developed by the CFMMEU, is provided in Table 11. A typical Careers Day would include a welcome and the activities from 10.15 am onwards. As the day also included launching the Building Futures website, this additional activity was therefore included. This website launch would not normally occur.

Table 11: Proposed program for the Career Day

Time	Activity	Location	Notes
9.00	Arrival and registration (COVID-19 protocols)	1 Wharf Rd foyer	Refreshments
9.30	Acknowledgment and housekeeping	Meeting room	5 minutes
9.35	CFMMEU MC welcomes guests	Meeting room	5 minutes
9.40	CFMMEU support for Women in Construction	Meeting room	5 minutes
	Launch website -		
9.45	Building Futures - Women in Construction Introduction & overview of the website	Meeting room	20 mins
10.05	Role model	Meeting room	5 minutes
10.10	Careers in construction for women in trades and labouring classifications: • Apprenticeships and trades • Labouring and high-risk work	Meeting room	CFMMEU Trainer 1 - 10 minutes explain different trades, pre and apprenticeship and apprenticeship, domestic/ commercial; pay rates) CFMMEU Trainer 2 - 10 minutes (explain different labouring classes, general; specialist e.g., asbestos removal; high risk work licences; civil/ commercial; pay rates; traineeships)
10.30	Site tour and demonstrations. Guests are divided into one of five subgroups.		
	• Group 1. Forklift	Wharf Rd warehouse (front)	Each group will spend 20 minutes in the designated area then rotate. Students from CFMEU Education and Training Unit will be demonstrating their skills under instruction. Each session will involve an explanation of the work being carried out and an opportunity to ask questions. Groups undertake practical carpentry session
	• Group 2. Scaffolding	Wharf Rd warehouse (mid)	
	• Group 3. Cranes	Wharf Rd hardstand	
	• Group 4. Asbestos removal	Unit 9/41 Sabre Drive	
	• Group 5. Carpentry	Units 4/31 and 10/41 Sabre Drive	
12.15	Conclude	Meeting room	Recap/evaluation/photo
12.30	Lunch	Meeting room	

4.4 The Careers Day

The CFMEU Education and Training Unit hosted the pilot Careers Day for young women and their careers teachers on 6 May 2021 at its training premises in Port Melbourne, Victoria. The timing coincided with the launch of the Building Futures website (which is separately reported under the website evaluation).

Fifteen career counsellors and 15 of their students from Victorian secondary schools were invited. Other guests were included on the day in relation to the launch of the website. Most of these guests left prior to the site tour and demonstration. The event was well organised, with students, careers teachers, and guests warmly welcomed on arrival and actively supported. Attendees were asked to record their details in accordance with COVID-19 visitor requirements and complete a COVID-19 questionnaire. Appropriately spaced seating was provided in the meeting room.

Introductory session

The event organisers waited until all students and their careers teachers were present before commencing proceedings. Several students were running late as they were catching public transport from outer metropolitan Melbourne. The numbers were lower than scheduled, with ten careers teachers, eight students and approx. ten guests present on the day. A good deal of chatter between attendees preceded the event, with the room quietening and attentive once proceedings commenced.

The event commenced formally with a welcome by the CFMMEU training manager, who outlined the day's format and introduced the CFMMEU's Women's Organiser, who was tasked as MC with introducing the speakers, welcoming the guests and generally keeping the event on track. After the website launch, a ‘life story’ presentation by a female carpentry apprentice was given. She noted she had initially considered a career in carpentry or interior design, but ultimately, she left school at age 15 to pursue her interest in building and construction. She noted that she had completed a number of tickets and undertook pre-apprenticeship training which helped develop her confidence. She noted that her father, who also worked in the industry, was very supportive, while her mother initially had some concerns about her career choice. The audience was attentive and engaged throughout the presentation. The audience reaction was audible when she stated that her career choice had enabled her to purchase her first home. She spoke passionately about her desire to "work alongside my union" to "change the culture" for women in construction and acknowledged the support provided explicitly by the State Government in assisting her and other women along the way. Her life story and experience in the construction industry resonated with the audience, and she was warmly applauded after her address.

The CFMMEU Trainer 1 then spoke forthrightly about what the CFMEU training site offered and noted that the building industry was not always welcoming towards women. They considered that more part-time opportunities were needed for women to accommodate (their) traditional family roles and structures. They stated that the building industry offered wage parity for women and

suggested that students be provided with "a try at everything" in schools to expand their understanding and choice. Generally, the presentation was down-to-earth and realistic with the scenarios relatable, which engaged an attentive audience.

The CFMMEU Trainer 2 started with their life story (from the age of 15) in the mining and construction industries to their current role with the CFMMEU. They were determined to encourage young women to see beyond entry-level jobs and look at other options. "Don't consider traffic management as a starting point for you". They provided a snapshot of certification and credentialing, demonstrating a depth of knowledge and authenticity for the audience. They stressed that women could choose a career change at any age and that physical strength was not the critical asset for work in the construction trades. The "white card" was noted as an essential starting base and for entry into the industry. As with the other Training staff member, they referenced the benefits of industry-wide wage parity and improvements to workplace safety with the increased entry of women into trades. They noted women are doing the industry "a service by working in the industry". Occupational Health and Safety was mentioned in the context of career progression and physical work as "maybe a good alternative as you get older". She was applauded loudly at the conclusion of her presentation. Two careers teachers were observed in an animated private discussion in response to a point made, with a number of audience members observed taking notes.

The audience warmly received all three speakers, and while one relied more on notes, all were effective in directly engaging the audience. The female presenters were well received and, due to the nature of the day, an excellent inclusion in the first part of the Careers Day.

Career stations

Following the presentations, the room was divided into five subgroups for rotation through five demonstration careers stations: forklifts, scaffolding, cranes, asbestos removal and carpentry. Careers teachers accompanied their students and, guests, where present, were invited to join a group. The groups were small, typically four to five students/teachers plus a CFMMEU supervising team member.

The two observers were allocated individually to groups 2 and 5. The following is a summary of the evaluation team's combined observations.

Forklifts

This session's presenter was experienced, impressive in knowledge terms and engaged the students and teachers effectively. She emphasised physical fitness and the need to be body confident and outlined industry requirements and aspects of forklift operation and safety. The emphasis was primarily on warehousing operations with some reference to construction applications. After a Q&A with ample opportunity to ask questions, students were encouraged to have a go at driving a forklift. A few students jumped at the opportunity and seemed to really to







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enjoy the experience. Several teachers quickly followed. "It was so fun! I was so excited!" said one student. "I really liked it – it was great fun!", said another.

The teachers in group 5 asked more questions than the students, whereas the students in group 2 engaged fairly readily in discussions – perhaps because they were more relaxed as their final careers station. Each group had a student who was visibly more excited and keener to participate in the 'hands-on' opportunity to drive a forklift, "every bit I do I want to do more and more", and a student who was quieter and declined the opportunity to "have a go". The teachers were all actively engaged. Nonetheless, all viewed their experience as positive in their written and oral feedback. The opportunity to drive a forklift generated excitement (and a photo opportunity).

Scaffolding

Scaffolding provided an active demonstration of scaffolding erection in a construction environment. The CFMMEU trainer invited students in Group 2 to gather in a small circle while aspects of scaffolding, including WorkSafe licence requirements, were outlined. The trainer was personable, open and friendly, and endeavoured to provide a context for scaffolding in the building and construction industry. Two brief demonstrations were provided by the (male) scaffolding trainees: 1. Ratcheting; 2. pulley tie-on system. An explanation of some tools was provided in response to a question by a teacher (Group 2) and observer (Group 5).

The concepts were explained clearly at a level appropriate to the students, and the trainer made a genuine effort to engage them. Students were asked more than once if there was anything they wanted to ask, and the trainer joked and did his best to encourage their interaction. The students nodded throughout and were attentive, while the careers teachers assisted the trainer by posing some questions. At the conclusion of the session, a student was asked by the observer what she felt about the demonstration. Throughout the session, this student had been quiet, with her teacher initiating any questions and discussion, but responded: "Pretty cool!".



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Group 5 received a more limited explanation of "scaffolding" and its application in building and construction industries, focusing on building a platform (the training exercise in progress during the session) and role in making things safer for workers. Its application to carpentry was also noted. Some pictures of scaffolding in situ at building sites may have helped the presentation. One of the trainers stated that it was great to have women in the industry and that there should be zero tolerance of those who were not as welcoming.

The pre-app from schools was explained along with the requirement for trainees to be 18 years or older to be eligible for a high-risk work licence. The heavy nature of the work was apparent to the young women, with the trainer noting that some scaffolding elements weighed more than 18 kg. No workaround was provided, and a teacher commented on leaving the station that scaffolding seemed to be very physical and not so suitable to women. She mentioned this also to someone at the next station who responded, "they sweat all day", reinforcing the teacher's concerns re the physicality of the trade and its suitability to women.

Cranes

A dogging course was in progress with male and female trainees present when the group arrived at the careers station. The trainer explained the trades career progression from dogging to rigging and then cranes. The dogging role was well explained, and students were provided with a demonstration of levelling a load. A young woman in Group 5 was clearly excited and stated that she didn't know this career existed. When asked about the career she had in mind, she said she was planning to do waterproofing and caulking (though she was not sure how she had become interested in this). Clearly impressed by the cranes' demonstration and the prospect of working in a tower crane, the same student later exclaimed: "This has probably been the best day! I really want to get into heights!".

A female dogging trainee was asked to come over and have a chat with the students. She was motivating and spoke about her progression from traffic management (holding signs – which she said was "boring") to dogging, which she was enjoying. This trainee was obviously motivated to progress what she saw clearly as her career in the construction industry and was energised by her training and desire to learn and do more. She spoke of her career aspirations and enjoyment of working in the industry. Her vitality and fitness were infectious and seemed to impress the students and careers teachers alike.

The presence of a couple of female dogging trainees was of benefit, with the young women naturally gravitating towards them and appearing more comfortable and confident in their presence. Students in Group 5 asked more questions

of the dogging trainees than the trainees at any of the other careers stations who were predominantly male. This involvement seemed to be the key to getting young women engaged: have young female role models willing to chat about their jobs. Age also clearly made a difference with the students visibly chattier with trainees closer to their age than other CFMMEU team members.

There were, however, some differences here between Group 5 and Group 2. Only the teachers in Group 5 spoke to the group leader and the men presenting, whereas the students in Group 2 engaged with the male trainer and asked some questions before turning their attention to the female trainee when she was called over to join the presentation. The ability to earn "*good money*" was also raised by the trainer. Group 2 students were asked afterwards if money was a motivator for them if they had thought about it. The broad response was "No": "I don't think about the money" and "Not really. A bit [but] not a motivator".



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Asbestos removal

Asbestos removal was the third careers station for Group 2 and the final careers station for Group 5. The presenter spoke in a lively manner, provided detail to a visual presentation about asbestos sites and types, and displayed three types of asbestos samples in sealed containers. There was a limited reference to asbestos-related disease and the history of asbestos use in Australia. The presenter explained that the training was all about using a containment system that had a negative pressure aspect and the need to suit up and use respirators, monitors and masks, and so forth. Students were invited to inspect the asbestos samples up close, but no student chose to (one made a cursory look in moving past the table into the next room). Students were attentive, nodding. However, the trainer primarily directed her attention to the adults, and no student from either group interacted with the presenter – nor was it asked of them. The primary interaction was between the trainer, group supervisor and observer.

Group 2 was provided with an opportunity to briefly observe a first aid training session upstairs while an asbestos removal simulation was prepared in the training room. Both groups exited via the training room and observed the simulation. The asbestos removal process was new to the students and seemed to cause a level of angst for some. No student in Group 2 was keen to remain in the room longer than necessary, and the majority made a quick exit. As such, the simulated dust extraction process seemed to be more of a deterrent than an incentive for young women to work in the industry. However, one student perhaps diplomatically and thoughtfully observed that it was "more engaging with simulation".

Group 5 was informed that people exiting a contaminated area need to be completely naked in the tunnel. A teacher remarked that this would likely deter women and be viewed as a risk in a mixed-gender environment.

Carpentry

Carpentry was the first careers station for Group 5 and the fourth careers station for Group 2. The training room was a precast concrete industrial warehouse containing a partially assembled timber framing structure erected by carpentry trainees as an accreditation exercise. Trainers were working throughout the sessions. Some background as to the structure's purpose and training accreditation differences between training providers was provided informally to Group 2 but not to Group 5. Greater use of the partially assembled structure could have been included as a formal part of the session.



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The carpentry careers station was set up as a "hands-on" demonstration in front of disassembly work led by a third-year female apprentice carpenter with the opportunity for student participation. The carpentry apprentice, who had presented their life story earlier in the day, was therefore known to the students.

A male CFMMEU team member assisted the demonstration and was very supportive. The teachers and students welcomed the presence of a female carpenter, and the group was clearly engaged. The group was invited to have a go at sanding and finishing a cutting board using timber

offcuts prepared for the event. Some students were a little hesitant, as no clear instructions were given. However, once they could see what to do, others (closely followed by their teachers) jumped at the opportunity. A careers teacher observed that the hands-on aspect serves to "give them an appetite for it".

This view was endorsed by a student who noted later: "It does help to do hands-on stuff – makes more sense of it." A careers teacher commented that they were concerned about how a student who declined all participation opportunities but was doing relevant pre-app training would fare in the construction industry. To be helpful, the CFMMEU staff member jumped in and finished off the work of one student. Therefore, an alternative approach may need to be considered for such students to ensure they are comfortable in such settings and empowered to demonstrate their knowledge. Whether this is the domain of schools, external training environments, or both is a question that requires careful consideration.



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While the session was constructed to provide the young women with a 'hands-on' experience, a brief introduction to carpentry and the role of carpenters in the construction industry would have provided some context for the students and teachers. While walking from this station, the teachers asked about pre-apps and the two types of sanders used (a belt sander and an orbital sander). It became apparent that the CFMMEU staff member was not in a technical or trade role and had more limited knowledge of these aspects.

Concluding session

After the career station sessions, the groups came together in the meeting room to briefly wind up the day's events and have lunch. Attendees were asked to complete a feedback survey distributed by the evaluation team. The students and careers teachers were very willing to complete the forms, which appeared to provide a point of reflection and discussion for the careers teachers and students. Most respondents provided written comments and returned the forms to the observers (evaluation team). The guests who completed the forms provided no written comments.

Lunch was informal and provided an opportunity for reflection and further interaction between students and careers teachers from different schools and discussion with CFMMEU team

members, apprentices, and guests. The atmosphere was very positive, with lots of chatter and introductions. People seemed to appreciate the event, with the students (when asked) optimistic about their experience and participation. Some take-home materials were available and consisted of promotional and industry materials from the CFMMEU, Incolink, CBus etc.



Figure 3: Careers Day take home materials

Evaluation survey

Students

Fifteen students were invited to the Careers Day, with eight attending and completing the survey. Students heard about the event through their teachers or school, with their primary motivations for attending relating to learning more about construction and trades, "being a woman in trade" or getting a job in a trade. All students selected ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Agree’ for the propositions: ‘I found the event to be useful/helpful’; ‘I found the event to be motivating’; ‘I found the event easy to follow’; ‘I learnt something new today about careers in construction’; ‘I now feel more excited about choosing a career in construction’; ‘I now feel more confident about choosing a career in construction’; and ‘I would recommend this type of event to other students/young women’.

The students varied in their responses to the question ‘Which careers station appealed to you the most?’, with two students each selecting *Forklift* and *Scaffolding*; three students selecting *Cranes* and five students selecting *Carpentry*. One student crossed through all options and wrote: "I don't just like one of them the most I like all of them [and] they all seem like something I want to try". This student, however, selected *Asbestos Removal* for the question ‘Which careers station appealed to you the least?’.

From the observations and survey, it was clear that the opportunity for demonstrations and hands-on experience had a marked impact on student responses and experience of the Careers Day. Their reasons for selecting the careers station which appealed the most included: "The forklift was pretty fun because I actually got to drive and experience it"; "I love to work with machinery"; "I thought they were really fascinating, and it was good to learn how they work"; "I love hands-on work and being able to create things"; and "It's the career path I'm heading into, so I found it interesting".

Asbestos Removal was the careers station which appealed the least for all but one student who in selecting Cranes responded: "I hate heights". Most of the students gave a reason for selecting Asbestos Removal as the careers station of least appeal. These related primarily to a lack of interest in working in asbestos removal, other careers stations being "more fascinating" and the "risk" or "stress" of dealing with asbestos.

All students selected 'No' to the question: "Was there anything that could have been done differently?". Three students referenced the planning and presentation positively ("done really well"; "planned/set out really well"; "everything was presented in a very appealing way to help motivation"), and five students gave no reason for their response. All students responded positively ('Yes') to the question: "Would you be interested in attending other such events in the future?". Reasons given included: "getting more information and seeing all the support is wonderful"; "Yes because I actually learnt some stuff."; "I would love to learn more about the construction industry."; "I learnt many new things, and it's made me feel confident."; and "because it helps with the confidence of women that want to do a trade".

Careers teachers

Fifteen teachers were invited to the Careers Day, with ten attending on the day. Seven careers teachers completed the survey. Of the careers teachers who responded to the survey, four were accompanied by one student, one by two students, and one attended unaccompanied. Careers teachers were asked how they heard about the event. Most received advice via email, either from the CFMMEU, through a teacher, or their school. Motivations for attending included: "increasing their awareness of roles for women in construction"; "supporting female students" interested in construction trades; accompanying a female student interested in a trade and furthering the school's "engagement with gender equality".

Six of the seven careers teachers strongly agreed with the propositions 'I would recommend this type of event to other careers teachers and students' and 'I learnt something new about careers in construction'; five strongly agreed that 'I found the event useful/helpful' and 'I now feel more confident about encouraging young women to consider a career in construction'. Equal numbers of careers teachers (N=3) agreed or strongly agreed that 'My student(s) found the event engaging'.

When asked, *'Which careers station appealed to your student(s) the most?',* all careers teachers (accompanied and unaccompanied) selected either *Forklift* or *Carpentry*. Reasons provided

include "It was fun", "Actually operated them" and "Was able to use tools/machinery", affirming the positive aspect of a hands-on learning experience for the young women. Most careers teachers reported *Asbestos Removal* as the careers station which 'appealed to your student(s) the least' (N=5) with the reasons ranging from "Didn't understand the background to the dangers of this product and not applicable at this stage of life" to "The risky nature of the industry" and simply "Didn't appeal to her at all". Interestingly, more teachers responded, 'Yes' than 'No' to the question "Was there anything that could have been done differently today", with their reasons including: "Video would have been good. Music, quick glimpses of people doing things brings about interest."; "would have loved to hear more stories from the women about their career journeys … include how they specifically overcame challenges being a woman"; "A longer morning break. only had 5 mins approx."; and "more info about how students get here". All careers teachers responded, 'Yes' to the question: "Would you be interested in attending such an event in the future?". Motivations included: "to bring more students"; "it was informative"; "to bring larger groups"; "the hands-on nature of second half"; and "I think a lot more of our female students would be interested in attending".

Guests

Participants ('guests') were invited from government and industry. Ten guests were invited, with all in attendance on the day. A number of guests left before the careers station rotations and therefore did not participate in the survey. Of those who did (N=4), two were from government and two from industry. The survey questions were contracted for this group due to relevance (non-students; non-teachers).

All guest respondents strongly agreed that the event was 'useful/helpful to young women' and 'useful/helpful to careers teachers', and that they 'would recommend this type of event to others wanting to know more about a career in construction'. The day's highlight for two respondents was the careers stations, with others noting their potential to influence other women to join the construction industry and "Hearing from the girls in the industry".

Responses to the question "Was there anything that could have been done differently" were varied. One respondent commented that they "found the speakers motivating and interesting"; another that some speakers were "a bit boring and irrelevant". Of those respondents who indicated they would not "be interested in attending such an event in the future", one noted they "Only came as a visitor", and the other "Once [was] enough but certainly would recommend [it] to others". The guests who indicated they would "be interested in attending such an event in the future" commented: "So powerful and good way to promote"; "Great day to promote women in the industry".

It should be noted that the views of the careers teachers and students are more valued in the evaluation as they were the targeted audience.

4.5 Overall findings and recommendations

The event organisers had three main goals. Firstly, they were keen that female students and the careers teachers were exposed to a wide range of opportunities in construction and secondly that they received some hands-on experience. These goals were undoubtedly met, as was the third goal that both parties were more enthusiastic about possibilities within the industry by the end of the day. The following section looks more thoroughly at particular aspects of the Careers Day and finishes with some recommendations.

How well was the event planned, organised and delivered overall?

The event was well thought out, organised and delivered. The location was appropriately chosen with a suitable meeting room and plenty of space to demonstrate various career options. The facilities were modern and well located with public transport at the front and public parking available in nearby streets.

The registration process with a sign in process and COVID-19 survey were well managed. The number of participants had been restricted for several reasons (including the COVID-19 situation), so it would have been disappointing that several students and teachers could not attend. The attendees were warmly welcomed, and it was apparent that both the teachers and students were looking forward to the event. Despite having to wait for some guests running late, the day ran strictly to time and the designated plan. It was not chaotic and ran very smoothly. The meeting room facilities were well laid out, complying with the COVID-19 spacing restrictions in place at that time. The outside areas where the career stations were located were within easy walking distance. These provided for an immersive educational experience for the female students and the careers teachers. The stations were well equipped, clean and well organised, with the participant's safety a priority. The hands-on sessions were highly regarded by all participants (i.e., careers stations).

How well was the information delivered?

The introductory session was also well planned and delivered. While some speakers were perhaps a little less confident, it is imagined that this would be overcome if conducted numerous times. While some of the materials presented illustrated construction workplaces and culture in a less favourable light, on the whole, it presented a realistic view. This balance of encouragement and a realistic portrayal of a woman's work life in construction must be carefully managed.

The speakers who spoke off the cuff with minimal notes did best and were most engaging. The only exception was the younger female role model, whose experience was directly relevant to the audience and compensated for her greater reliance on a written speech. Keeping the presentations less formal did appear to suit the audience well. Perhaps, having guests with industry knowledge for the website launch, the need for some general industry information was overlooked. From the conversations between the career stations, some context materials may

have helped participants make more sense of what they were seeing and experiencing. In addition, it was apparent that the information of interest to the students differed from that of the careers teachers. Finally, the information provided in the information session concentrated on high-risk work, which is the main focus of the CFMEU training centre.

The careers stations were a highlight of the day and overall were well presented. The staff were all friendly and welcoming. However, some teachers and students were a little unclear how the activities within the career stations related to construction. Based on the observations and conversations, a little more context and some targeted information would have been well received. For instance, this could have been included earlier or made more use of activities occurring around the station (e.g., dismantling the timber frame). The career stations that involved female presenters or trainees and specific hands-on exercises (carpentry and forklift) were particularly well received. All enjoyed driving the forklift, but perhaps a more challenging activity in the carpentry section could be included if more time was available. Some presentations were less interactive and more content-driven rather than student-driven. Perhaps the addition of a Q and A session would have drawn in students and provided an opportunity for them to engage more fully with the materials. As the periods walking between the career stations became a time of discussion, staffing these intervals with a construction worker could be implemented in future Careers Days. In addition, some teachers mentioned the desire for post-school training information to give their students.

The take-home materials consisted of materials from the CFMMEU, Incolink, Cbus etc. Some explanations of these organisations and more career-relevant information (a sheet with the Building Futures website and other useful websites) would be valuable to teachers and students.

How was the information perceived by attendees, and did it generate careers interest?

Overall, the information presented to the students and careers teachers was well received. Responses by young women are not always easy to gauge, with some students outwardly excited and others more restrained. However, it was clear from the evaluation feedback surveys that both the students and careers teachers strongly valued the opportunity to experience the trades training environment and the opportunity for students to ‘have a go’ at the carpentry and forklift stations, in particular.

The audience was attentive during the initial presentations and the "life stories" seemed to hold the greatest appeal. Students engaged more readily with other young women, such as the female role model, who was an apprentice, and the female trainees. They also appeared to grow more confident as they rotated through the stations and asked more questions as they progressed or took part in activities more readily. The teachers engaged readily with the friendly CFMMEU staff, particularly those who asked questions. The teachers seem to enjoy the hands-on experiences as much as the young women.

Overall, the information presented at the various careers stations was well received and generated a dialogue between the presenters and the audience. Both students and careers teachers responded when the opportunity arose to ask questions. The only drawbacks were that sometimes the interactions did not encourage questions, or when machinery was involved and was not paused, it could be challenging to hear the explanations. The students were more reluctant to move on when they had a chance to do more hands-on components or chat with young women trainees. The teachers were comfortable chatting with all the staff.

Interestingly, the demonstrations did not sufficiently influence students who had a specific career pathway in mind to consider deviating from their nominated career choice. This was true for the two students considering future training in carpentry. However, students who were not so committed to their choice were keen to understand various options when exposed to some alternatives. They were, therefore, more open to considering new pathways. It was evident from the observations at the career stations, the conversations between stations and the general feedback that the event had generated career interest for the young women and a greater understanding of careers by the teachers themselves.

Recommendations

1. The pilot of the Careers Day proved successful to both young women and their careers teachers. It should therefore be replicated.
2. The needs of the teachers (to encourage young women and direct them to resources) and young women (to motivate and inform) do have differences that should be taken into account more in future events. Focus groups or interviews with teachers and younger female trainees could identify the different nature of the content needed to meet the requirements of both groups.
3. The "life stories" from women working in the industry were valued. They should continue and could perhaps be supplemented with video content of younger women working on a typical construction site.
4. The current immersive approach is supported, and the career stations were a highlight of the day. Including some career stations which lead to apprenticeships (expanding the carpentry one to include, say, electrical and plumbing) could supplement the current focus on high-risk work. The asbestos removal and scaffolding work held less appeal to the young women and their careers teachers.
5. The inclusion of younger women (either as trainees or presenters) improved student engagement. Continuing and expanding on this approach is recommended.
6. Participants valued the more informal approach taken to the day. However, more signposting and contextual information at the beginning, before career stations and between career stations would enhance their experiences.

7. A video with accessible explanations of the industry, the building site, and simple diagrams on training pathways that feature women on site could be produced and used by future presenters and the Building Futures website. This would also reduce the burden on future Careers Days' presenters.
8. A simple take-home resource with diagrams of career pathways covering a variety of construction on site roles and useful websites (including the Building Futures one) would be a helpful addition to the current take-home materials, especially if structured to suit the different needs of both parties. The CFMEU Education and Training ‘Dare to learn: Career Pathways Guide’ is a useful example.
9. Ensure all presentations speak to and engage the students directly and are age-appropriate and career-relevant. There was a lack of direct inclusion of students in some parts of the day – no Q&As, no opportunity to ask questions, no "put your hand up if"/"how many of you are/have …" type questions.
10. A short break between the presentations and career stations should be considered.

5. THE BUILDING FUTURES WEBSITE

5.1 Overview

ACTIONS

Website

- Develop a website promoting the uptake of trades and semi-skilled roles in the construction industry.
- The audiences were secondary students, school-based careers teachers/counsellors, VET and VCAL course providers and families of secondary students.

The Building Futures - Women in Construction website was developed as a part of the effort to increase the attraction of young women to construction roles. The website was primarily targeted at young women considering a career in the construction industry, their parents, and careers teachers/career counsellors advising school-aged women regarding such career opportunities and pathways. The CFMMEU led this work on behalf of the BICC. Since the website launch on the 6th May 2021 to 29th July 2021 2,227 new users have visited the website, with 1,025 users coming from the digital ad campaign. The website can be accessed at: https://www.womeninconstruction.com.au/

OVERALL FINDING

The female secondary school students and careers teachers perceived the website as very appealing and of great interest during the website launch. The young trainees within the focus groups agreed with this sentiment and provided a good insight into the content and what they would have during the construction career decision-making process. They found the images of young women very motivating and the graphics (and colours selected) very appealing. However, more targeted and Victorian specific information relating to on site construction roles is still needed. Not using large amounts of text, including more visuals and videos and Victorian specific information, is recommended. Further recommendations are included at the end of this section. It is noted that further work has been undertaken on the website since this evaluation.

5.2 Evaluation approach

Background

The evaluation of websites is an important phase of their life cycle. There is no universally accepted method or technique for website evaluation (Tsai et al. 2010). Different researchers have developed numerous methodologies and tools to evaluate websites in various contexts. Evaluations can be conducted through automated checking of conformance to specific guidelines

and standards or via evaluations conducted by experts, using simulations or with potential users (Petrie & Bevan, 2009). When the purpose of the assessment is to ensure target groups receive precise information, the evaluation by potential users is deemed the most suitable method.

The criteria for website evaluation have been explored in numerous studies. For example, Lin and Joyce (2004) identified six success factors for a successful online auction website: design and content, consumer education, security, customer support, online community, and market positioning. Abanumy et al. (2005) found that the quality of governmental websites can be assessed by how quick response time is, how up-to-date and accurate information is, the effectiveness of the search tool, how easy they are to understand, and how secure transactions are. Petrie and Bevan (2009) introduced the concepts of accessibility, usability, and user experience as the criteria against which developers should be evaluating their *e*-Systems. Hasan and Abuelrub (2011) proposed a framework with four dimensions - content quality, design quality, organisation quality, and user-friendly quality, which can be used as general criteria to evaluate all kinds of websites. Moustakis and colleagues (2004) put forth a framework composed of a hierarchical structure of criteria and sub-criteria to support website quality assessment. The framework covered aspects like content, navigation, design and structure, appearance and multimedia, and uniqueness.

Methods

Three methods were adopted to collate the evaluation data relating to the Women in Construction Website. These included key informant interviews, a focus group and a participant feedback survey. Two staff members of the website development company and a CFMMEU staff member were interviewed before the website's launch to understand more about the website development and what system analytics would be possible to access.

At the website's launch, which coincided with the Careers Day, participants were asked to provide feedback on their perceptions of the website. These ascertained their level of agreement with several statements relating to their perceptions of attractiveness, usefulness, and future use. The survey questions were structured as Likert type scales, allowing participants to answer from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Dillman, 2000; Crano et al., 2014). Separate participant feedback surveys were developed for students, careers teachers and other attendees. These were distributed at the conclusion of the day.

Finally, as the primary purpose of this evaluation was to ensure that the website provided the required information to specific users, and young women were the primary target for the site, it was decided to concentrate on this cohort and use a focus group. This was the main reference for the evaluation data. Two experienced researchers conducted the focus group, and a standard protocol was developed. This protocol was based on a review of the literature (Abanumy et al., 2005; Hasan & Abuelrub, 2011; Petrie & Bevan, 2009; Sun et al., 2017) and focused on the following:

- Quality of information

- Level of interactiveness
- Website attractiveness
- Navigability
- Technical aspects
- Comparison with other similar resources

5.3 Development of the website

The Building Futures website (https://www.womeninconstruction.com.au/) aims to increase the number of young women in construction roles by having information for them, their parents, and their career teachers or career counsellors.

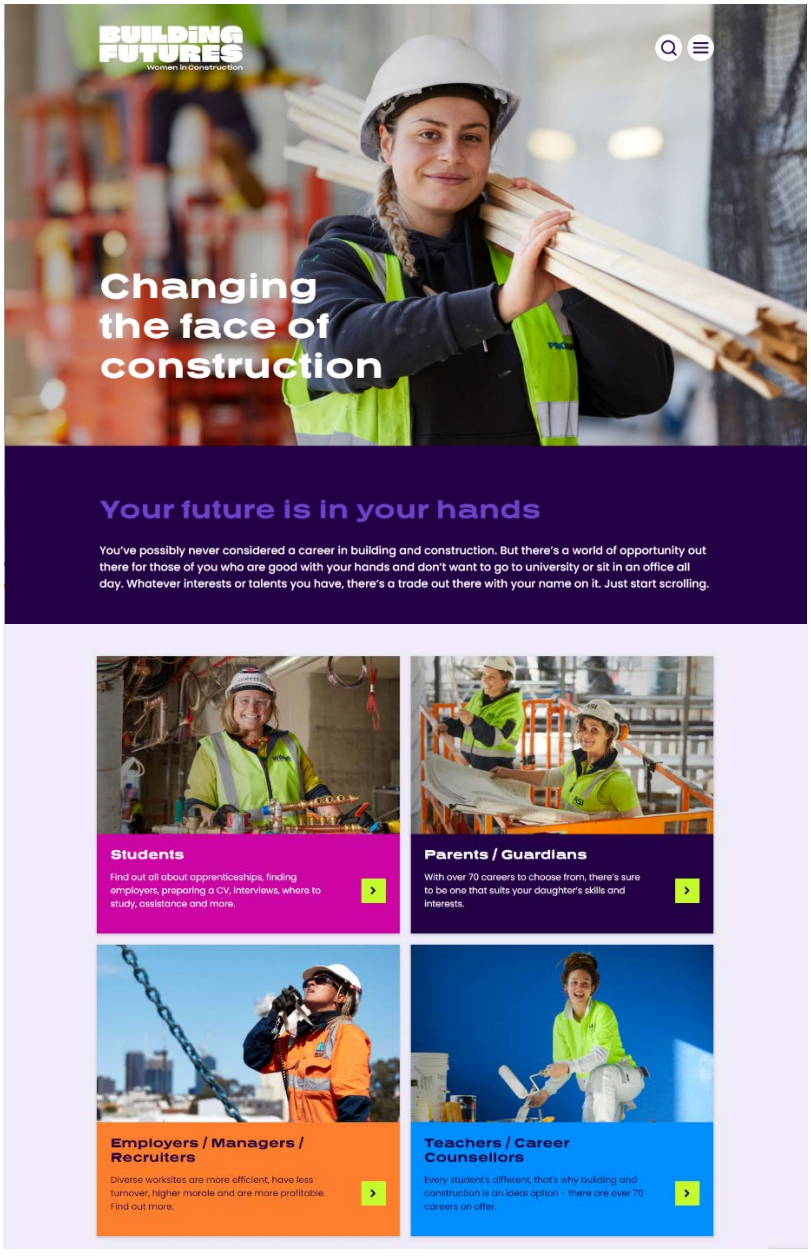


Figure 4: Screenshot of Building Futures website home page

The intention is that the website will provide relevant information to each target group and increase the uptake of construction industry roles by women in secondary education. The site was explicitly focused on trades and semi-skilled roles, rather than professional roles, with links provided to apprenticeships rather than construction management or engineering degrees.

A particular emphasis had been made on images used so that they were "realistic and relatable". Chunky grounded text and vibrant colours were used as it was felt this would resonate with the target cohort. The website is considered as evolving, and tracking its use has been considered, and the google analytics package included part of the website development brief.

The name Building Futures was selected as it portrayed a positive forward-focused image of the opportunities in construction. This term has been used in Australia and elsewhere to promote construction to both mixed and female-only cohorts[9].

The website visuals were presented to the IAT group, and feedback was sought.

The website had four major sections which could be accessed from the home page:

- Students
- Parents/Guardians
- Employers/Managers/Recruiters
- Teachers/Career Counsellors

Each section has information relevant to that target audience. A visual map of the broad sections is provided in Figure 5.

The website development team mentioned that they would be using Google Analytics to track the website traffic on an ongoing basis. This could include demographic data about the users, frequency and length of return visitors, time spent on each page of the website and so on, which they noted would be helpful for future additions to the website. These reports are available from the team if required. As the website had not been operating for long and was undergoing some maintenance during May, it was considered they would not be particularly useful at this time.

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[9] https://tasbgas.com.au/
A Tasmanian Building Group apprenticeship scheme.
https://www.womenbuildingfutures.ca/
Offering industry recognized training and affordable housing for women looking to enter the construction, maintenance and driving industries in Canada.
https://www.buildingfutures.ca/
Giving students an opportunity to safely explore a career in Nova Scotia's construction industry.
https://www.communityservicesagency.org/building-futures-pre-apprenticeship.html
The Community Services Agency of the Metro Washington Council is the non-profit arm of the local AFL-CIO that manages the Building Futures program and has been providing worker-centered services since 1991.
https://www.buildingfuturesmag.com/
A magazine produced in Oregon, USA.



Figure 5: Website sections

5.3 Website launch and surveys

The Building Futures: Women in Construction website was launched at the Careers Day on 6th May 2021. The event was attended by female secondary students, their career teachers, and guests from the industry. The event organisers introduced the website, and the website developers spoke about the site and presented a PowerPoint presentation that displayed screenshots and images used. The presentation relating to the website was relatively short, and participants were not navigated through it. They therefore relied on the visuals presented when answering the Feedback surveys, which were distributed at the end of the Careers Day. This was used to ascertain initial perceptions and thoughts on the website presented during its launch.

The organiser of the event launched the website, highlighting the Building Futures branding. The website was described as "sophisticated" and "evolving". After that, two members of Creative Works – the website developers – demonstrated elements of the website to the audience.

Participants in the Careers Day were asked to complete a feedback survey that contained one question, with several parts, on the Building Futures website. They were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement to ten statements relating to the perceptions and future use of the website.

Of the 15 students invited to the Careers Day, eight attended and completed the survey. A majority of students (N=7) strongly agreed with the propositions 'I think the website has content which will be useful to me', 'I will definitely visit the website after today', and 'I would recommend the website to other students'. A majority (N=6) also strongly agreed with the statements 'I thought the website looked attractive', 'I thought the website looked easy to navigate', and 'I liked the graphics and images presented'. Overall, the response from the students was very positive.

Of the seven career teachers who completed the survey, five agreed with the proposition 'I felt excited to see the Building Futures website about careers in construction', and two strongly agreed with this statement. Six of the seven teachers strongly agreed 'I will definitely visit the website after today' with equivalent numbers strongly agreeing (N=4) or agreeing (N=3) with the propositions 'I thought the website looked attractive', 'I thought the website looked easy to navigate', and 'I liked the graphics and images presented'. Careers teachers selected 'Neither Agree nor Disagree', 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' to the proposition 'I think the website does not present anything new'.

Several guests (from the industry and government) left immediately after the launch and did not participate in the survey. All of those who did (N=4) reacted positively to the Building Futures website demonstration, strongly agreeing to the propositions 'I will definitely visit the website after today' and 'I would recommend the website to others'.

Overall, the survey responses provided a good starting point for ascertaining the initial perceptions of potential users of the website. The website launch at Careers Day was an ideal setting to obtain their responses.

5.4 Focus group

The feedback survey data, though helpful, did not provide in-depth content and needed to be supplemented with questions probing the 'why' and 'how' of the responses. A focus group discussion was determined to be the most suitable method for collecting in-depth qualitative data for obtaining the rich, detailed data required for this evaluation.

A focus group was conducted with eight young women who are currently undergoing construction trades training or have a new role in the industry. Research indicates that this is an excellent size as the discussion can be moderated yet yield different ideas (Barbour, 2014). The women were from 20 to 30 years old and had been in the industry for less than five years. This group was considered ideal for this evaluation as they could more easily recall their own career journey (than more experienced women) and use the more recently acquired knowledge of the industry that non-entrants would lack. The focus group was conducted virtually on the 13th of May 2021 via Zoom. None of the participants had previously viewed the website. It is noted that the website was taken off-line so some changes could be made later in May.

Two researchers conducted the focus group. It was audio and video recorded with the participants' consent so key themes could be analysed later. Once the discussion ended and participants left the zoom meeting, the researchers engaged in a 30-minute debriefing session. This allowed them to compare notes, share highlights, and outline the key points heard during the session.

The focus group was held online to comply with COVID-related restrictions. Conducting the group virtually offered the additional advantage of saving on organizing time for the researchers and travel time for the participants. However, a rapport is established quickly in traditional face-to-face settings, encouraging a more free-flowing discussion (Barbour, 2014). To counter this, the

researchers demonstrated using the 'Annotate' function on Zoom to 'break the ice' and quickly create a more participatory environment. Once the participants became familiar with it, they were asked to identify specific areas for which they may have sought information in the past (or issues for which they needed information at present) regarding a construction career on site. A snapshot of the annotate function used in the zoom discussion is shown below in Figure 6, which were then collectively grouped into similar themes:

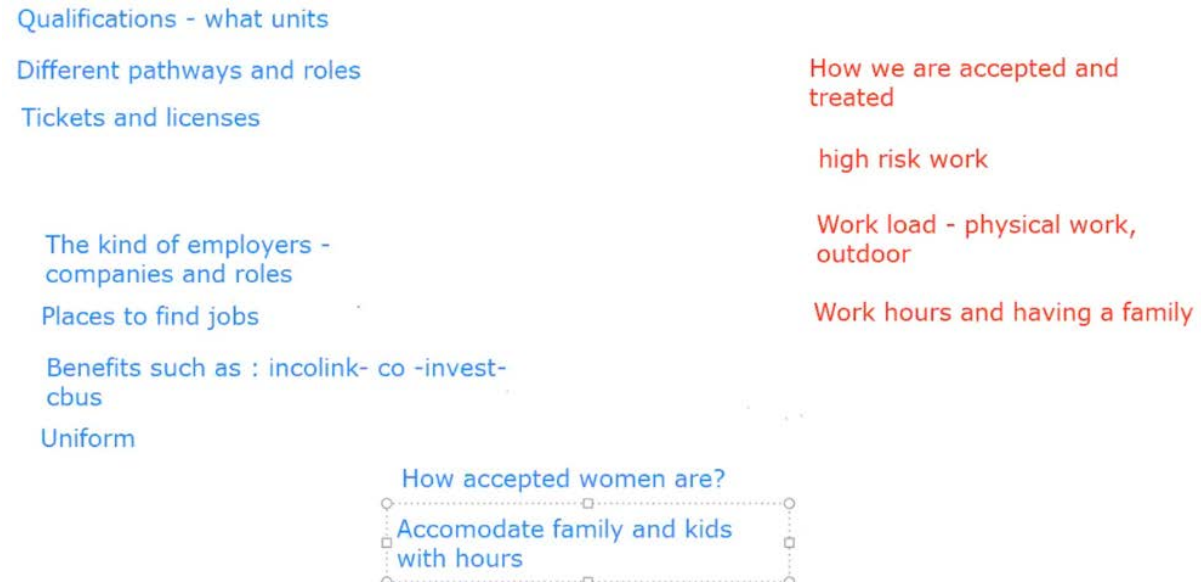


Figure 6: Screenshot of participant annotation

Key issues and questions requiring answers

The participants wanted to know more about the qualifications needed to pursue a construction role. Specifically, they wanted to learn more about the units to take, the different roles available, various pathways to achieve those roles, and specific information on relevant tickets, licences and apprenticeships. Regarding employment, the central area of inquiry was where to look for jobs and what sort of support services were available to them. They also wanted information on the kind of roles that employers were offering.

The main topics of concern, when starting, were whether the work environment was accepting towards women, how do women manage long work hours and family life, and whether the work was high risk and required heavy physical labour. Several women mentioned that when they were considering a career in the construction industry, they would have liked to know more about the work environment and hear from other women in the industry. They wanted to know real-life stories regarding achieving work-life balance and whether the work environment was accepting towards women. Lastly, there was consensus that it would be great to find some information to alleviate parents' concerns about daughters considering a career in the construction industry.

These issues that were either written out or verbally mentioned were grouped into four functional categories as shown in Figure 7.

Qualifications What units to take? Pathways and roles Tickets and licences	**Role Models** How accepted are women? Work-life balance Real-life success stories
Employment Where to look for jobs? Kind of employers (roles) Support services (Incolink) Uniforms	**Information for Parents** How accepted are women? Work-life balance Physical workload High-risk work

Figure 7: Functional grouping of key areas of inquiry

The participants were then divided into three groups (using the breakout rooms) of around 2-3 participants and asked to access the website (https://www.womeninconstruction.com.au/) to look for this information. The participants then worked together or separately to identify the information they thought was needed regarding qualifications, role models, employment and information for parents. Once they had had a chance to explore the website and access the information, they were asked to join the whole group again (return to the main room within Zoom). After that, the focus group discussion was initiated.

In the first half of the discussion, the participants were asked to comment on these specific issues.

The questions that guided the discussion were:

1. Did you find the information you needed on this topic?
2. How clear was the information provided on this topic?
3. Was the information helpful?
4. What was missing that you wanted to know more about?
5. Were there links to where you could find out more on the topic?

The researchers then steered the discussion towards the overall experience of using the website, perception of its effectiveness as a resource to attract more young women into construction roles, and suggestions for improving the website. The questions that guided this part of the discussion were:

1. What are your overall impressions of the website? How was the overall experience of using the website?
    - Did you need help navigating?
    - Was it easy to find the right sections?
    - Were there any technical issues?

- What platform did you use it on?
- Did the website load properly?

2. After using the website today, do you feel more motivated or demotivated to take on a construction role, and why?
3. How would you rate the attractiveness of the website? What did the images signify to you? What about the branding?
4. Have you used other websites for gaining more information or resources regarding pursuing a career in construction roles? How does this website compare to those other websites?
5. What changes would you suggest to the website?

Data Analysis

A combination of abridged transcript-based analysis and note-based analysis was conducted (Wilkinson, 2011). Abridged transcript-based analysis relies on listening to the audio recording (and watching the video recording) of the focus group discussion and developing an abridged transcript of the relevant and valuable portions of the analysis (Wilkinson, 2011). It excludes things like an introduction, moderator instructions, and comments not related to the topic. The note-based analysis relies on field notes (Wilkinson, 2011). Two researchers were conducting the focus group at any given time – one researcher was moderating while the other took notes. The researchers compared notes at the end of the focus group discussion when all the participants had left the zoom meeting. Taking field notes also allowed the researchers to note the body language and gauge the interest levels of the participants. This helped triangulate the key themes and generate more confidence in the findings.

The abridged transcript and the field notes were analysed using the "Key Concepts" analytical framework (Wilkinson, 2011). This is depicted in Figure 8.

Analytical Framework	Objective	Typical Use
• Key Concepts	• Identify the key themes. These are factors of central importance.	• It helps identify a limited number of important ideas, experiences or preferences that add to the study

Figure 8: Key concepts analytical framework (adapted from Wilkinson, 2011)

The abridged transcript and field notes were coded for key themes and concepts. The basis of evaluation, key issues, and questions were considered while coding the transcripts.

Findings

Quality of information

There was a consensus that the information on the website was useful and insightful. However, several participants felt that it could have been more concise. When trying to find specific information, they felt that it was cumbersome to read through text-heavy sections. An edited-summarised version of the text or interactive material (e.g., video) to convey that information was preferred.

> *I am not the type to read everything, I would rather watch a video [Focus group participant]*
>
> *The existing stuff is very good, but it is a lot of reading…needs to be structured and summarised [Focus group participant]*

Information was found for most of the key areas identified at the beginning of the focus group. However, the participants found that the website had an exclusive focus on school students and pathways through apprenticeships. Information regarding different roles and pathways was missing. This could be related to the background of these participants, many of whom were engaged in non-apprenticeship training. One of the participants suggested that the current home page sections of students, teachers/counsellors, parents, and employers can be supplemented with another section of 'career change' which could have information for women who are considering a career change to the construction industry. This again was a reflection on their own path of coming into construction not straight from secondary school but via other careers. A number of participants suggested the addition of information related to licences, tickets, different roles, and different pathways. Other participants then became excited to hear this idea and agreed that it would be helpful to have this information on multiple pathways.

Several participants said that it would be helpful to have a list of employers who are actively recruiting women. This would give them confidence in employment opportunities and provide a concrete starting point for applying for jobs.

> *Hearing from the companies would be great – that this is what we do, and we would like to employ more women, and this is what we are looking for [Focus group participant]*

It was also suggested that the information on the website (like the FAQs for parents) be periodically updated based on feedback from the users.

Overall, the consensus was that the information on the website was a great starting point, particularly for young women. This was mentioned several times across the focus groups indicating more information would be preferred. In addition, a more nuanced understanding and

description of the different roles and pathways would enable it to help a wider audience, particularly those who do not want to take the apprenticeship pathway. More depth and examples of the ranges of careers were sought but not found. The current information is helpful, clear, and easy to comprehend but could be summarised or presented more interactively. An interest in more information on possible employment opportunities was also strongly expressed.

Level of interactiveness

The participants expressed that the website should have more interactive material. Most of the participants wanted to hear from women who are currently in the construction industry. They wanted to know more real-life stories captured in a video format to keep them engaged and to make them believe that women can have a successful career in this industry.

> *I want to hear women talk about safety [on site] and talk about the [work] environment. [Focus group participant]*

The discussion regarding the use of videos got all the participants interested and excited (as evidenced by their body language and eagerness to talk). One of the suggestions that got other participants' strong approval was the use of videos in the website section targeted at parents of women considering a construction role.

> *….. a few videos from women saying how they got into construction… especially for parents, just telling them that it's actually a great place to be and it's not a scary place your daughter is going to. [Focus group participant]*

The discussion led another participant to suggest that videos of parents who were initially doubtful and had concerns but are now happy with their daughters working in the construction sector would be a great addition to this section of the website. Other participants agreed that this would be very helpful to convince parents and alleviate some of their concerns. The parents' support, in turn, would help motivate young women to uptake roles in the construction industry.

Website attractiveness

All the participants found the website to be visually appealing. They felt that images were very effective, and they all expressed support for this approach. When probed further, they said it made them feel more motivated to take on a construction role and that women can succeed in construction.

> *There are pictures of women actually working and not just doing traffic stuff, which is great! [Focus group participant]*

> *The images showed women, which was awesome! [Focus group participant]*

The consensus was that the website branding, design, and use of images were very attractive and motivating. The images signified to participants that women could be successful and involved in different kinds of jobs. The design also led them to see the resource as one that was dedicated to women.

Navigability

The different sections were easy to navigate, and only one of the participants reported any issues in navigating the website. Including a link to the home page on every page may help assist navigability.

Technical Aspects

Three participants accessed the website on their mobile phones and the rest on their laptops. None of the participants had any technical issues in loading or operating the website.

Comparison with Other Similar Resources

The participants were excited to use the website as they had not come across a similar resource in the past. They had accessed various TAFEs and other resources and found it hard to access the information they wanted in one place.

> *Not used any other website like that. I am happy to put it out everywhere because I think it is fantastic! [Focus group participant]*
>
> *Never had anything like this before! [Focus group participant]*

None of the participants had any other similar resource in mind to draw a comparison.

5.5 Overall findings and recommendations

Overall, the feedback from the website launch interviews, surveys and focus group was positive. The response from female school students and careers teachers to the website launch presentation supported its appeal, an appreciation of its aesthetics and an interest in visiting it. (It should be noted that other materials were added to the website after the website launch and focus group).

The focus group regarded the website as very beneficial to young women when exploring a career in construction. The images of young women and the graphics adopted were considered a vital aspect of the website's appeal. The website was deemed a unique resource for helping young women (and their parents). However, it was considered as something that required further adjustments to make it even better.

> *As a start it is great, but it just needs to be polished [Focus group participant]*

The discussion did not yield as detailed insights regarding the information about career counsellors/teachers. It did, however, lead to some insightful suggestions and feedback for improving the website in the future. The overall findings with regard to the different evaluation dimensions are summarised below.

Quality of Information

- Good quality information but is missing some depth.
- Some information could be summarised and better structured.

- More information on specific jobs and roles would be useful.
- Greater use of visual materials, e.g., diagrams and videos, should be used.
- More information for parents should be provided.
- Clearer information on career pathways using Victorian specific information should be included.
- Career changers need to be addressed.
- Links to employment opportunities would be beneficial.

Level of interactiveness

- Existing interactive material is of good quality.
- Interactive material could be increased.
- More videos and visual material would benefit this cohort.

Website attractiveness

- Website is very attractive.
- Images are very motivating.

Navigability

- Few problems in navigating the website.
- The website is not complex and site hierarchy is not deep, so it is easy to navigate.
- Home page buttons should be added to help return back to this area of the website.
- Most links to further information only went to the same screen where participant could engage with an organisation.

Technical aspects

- No technical issues reported in loading and operating the website.

Comparison with other similar resources

- Considered a unique resource by the women and one which should be built upon.
- No other such website used to be able make a comparison.
- Other materials are available but not used by this group.

Recommendations

1. The Building Future website was noted during the launch as an evolving platform. It was well regarded by the female students, careers teachers who were at the website launch and the young female trainees within a focus group. The continuation of this work is

recommended as it is of strong appeal with its focus on women, on site roles and Victorian-specific information.

2. The images were motivating to young women, and the logo's graphics, colours, and design were very appealing. This approach using real women and real stories is also recommended for any future work.
3. More visual materials and videos, in particular, are advised as a good way to disseminate information to the intended audiences. These could include simple interactive diagrams relating to careers and training requirements within Victoria, videos of women focusing on their job, different site roles, working conditions, and/or managing work and family, etc. More assurance could be provided for prospective parents through videos of the authentic stories of other parents, rather than just written text.
4. The written materials should be reviewed to ensure it is simple, on point and accurate. Better structuring and removal of extraneous materials is recommended, e.g., industry links. Curated and targeted materials which are Victorian specific would be beneficial. For instance, specific information on roles, training and TAFE courses to investigate.
5. As too much content can be confusing and distracting, using focus groups or other review processes to decide on final and future content should be considered.
6. The inclusion of materials specific to career changes and the different pathways into construction is suggested. Nearly all the women in the focus groups were young but came into construction after some time in another industry.
7. Links to employment opportunities were suggested and could be accommodated in the employer section, with employers posting opportunities. However, if this is difficult to maintain, links to Victorian industry-specific employment and apprenticeship websites should be considered.
8. Links to other local Australian sites could enhance the site. For instance,

   https://masterbuilders.com.au/Resources/Career-Centre/Women-Building-Australia

   https://www.womenbuildingaustralia.com.au/

   https://tradeswomenaustralia.com.au/our-story/

   https://masterbuilders.com.au/Resources/Career-Centre

6. SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN

6.1 Overview

ACTIONS

Support Program for Women

- Establish, maintain and expand (over time) a central point for recruitment matters specific to the needs of women seeking employment within the trade and semi-skilled roles.
- Provide social support and assistance to women looking for employment in these roles.

The support program for women was developed as a part of the attraction part of the Women in Construction strategy but, in fact, also overlaps with recruitment aspects. The program's primary objective was to establish a central point of contact for women seeking information about trade and semi-skilled employment opportunities, including applying for work in the industry, pathways for career progression, and job matching opportunities. An online portal for women and employers was created, and a support program was conducted. Incolink led this initiative on behalf of the BICC.

OVERALL FINDING

The support program was impacted by employers' non-engagement and reduced roles due to the COVID situation. However, despite this, the program was well regarded by the female participants. Most of the women were resilient, had qualifications, and liked the industry but could not gain employment or change into employment more suited to their needs and interests. Much of the available work had come through Incolink contacts, labour-hire companies, or word of mouth. Informal recruitment practices that permit gender and age bias were apparent and limited women’s opportunities. It would appear that the roles for the less able male worker (at the end of their career) are the ones assigned as on site roles for women. However, older women often cannot access these jobs. It is recommended that the program continue, provided employers' “buy-in” is assured. Other recommendations for the programs are also made.

6.2 Evaluation approach

Background

Entry into the skilled worker and construction trades relies heavily on social connections and ‘word of mouth’ recommendations. These informal processes are considered a barrier to women

being recruited (Bridges et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that emotional support and career guidance can positively impact the number of women recruited to the construction industry (Shewring, 2009). Providing women with support, career counselling, matching them with available job opportunities should help overcome uncertainty over career choices and isolation experienced and ease their entry into a career in construction.

Methods

The support program was evaluated to identify the actual outcomes, acknowledge any challenges faced, and differentiate, if applicable, which actions have yielded better outcomes so they can be continued, expanded, or modified in the future. The questions that guided this evaluation were:

- How was the Incolink support program developed, and what have been the key outcomes of the program?
- What are the experiences of female job seekers regarding the support received through the Incolink program?

Data were collected by conducting key informant interviews and semi-structured interview with participants.

- Two Incolink staff members who were involved in the organising and running of the Incolink support program were interviewed to gain information about the program, and its intended goals and objectives. One member was interviewed again to gain a better understanding of the program's outcomes and discuss work experiences and older participant involvement.
- Ten women enrolled in the Incolink support program and registered an interest in looking for employment opportunities in the construction industry were interviewed to understand their experiences with the support program and their career journey so far.

Given the COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews were conducted virtually, over Zoom or telephone. The interviews conducted with the Incolink staff members lasted approx. one hour and were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. In particular, these interviews explored how the Incolink support program was developed and implemented and what have been the key outcomes of the program.

The interviews with the program participants were 30-45 minutes long and were recorded with their permission. Incolink requested all participants to take part in an interview about the program. The Incolink staff then followed up these requests with over half of the participants. After several attempts by both Incolink and the evaluation team, ten women agreed to participate and discuss their experiences looking for jobs in the construction industry. In particular, the interviews explored the experiences of female job seekers regarding the support received through the Incolink support program.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed based on the principles of thematic coding analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis is beneficial in analysing qualitative data

to answer specific research questions about people's experiences, views and perceptions, and representations of a given phenomenon or intervention. This analysis helped the researchers outline the key themes, identify the key challenges in implementing the program, and provide some recommendations for any similar programs in the future.

6.3 The development of the support program

Two Incolink staff members were interviewed at the start of the evaluation process. One member was in a very senior role in Incolink, with years of experience in providing Incolink participants with services for their physical, mental, and financial well-being. The other staff member was hired as a part of the Incolink support program and had been in her role for almost a year. The position (Job Support Officer) was created as a part of the Incolink support program to provide jobseekers with the support required during and after the recruitment process.

The senior staff member outlined three main deliverables of the support program:

- Creating a portal that allows female job seekers and potential employers to express an interest.
- Creating the position of a job support officer in the organisation to have a more personal and targeted approach in matching women with jobs that are in line with their interests and skills.
- Providing women with access to Incolink's counselling services for dealing with setbacks, detrimental experiences in their workplaces, financial hardships, and so on.

Job support portal and employment outcomes

A job support "portal" was created on the Women in Construction website. This was established for women seeking support to enter the construction industry and help them get matched with opportunities in line with their skills and qualifications. A profile with contact details and their trade and work preferences could be created. A screenshot is provided in Figure 9.

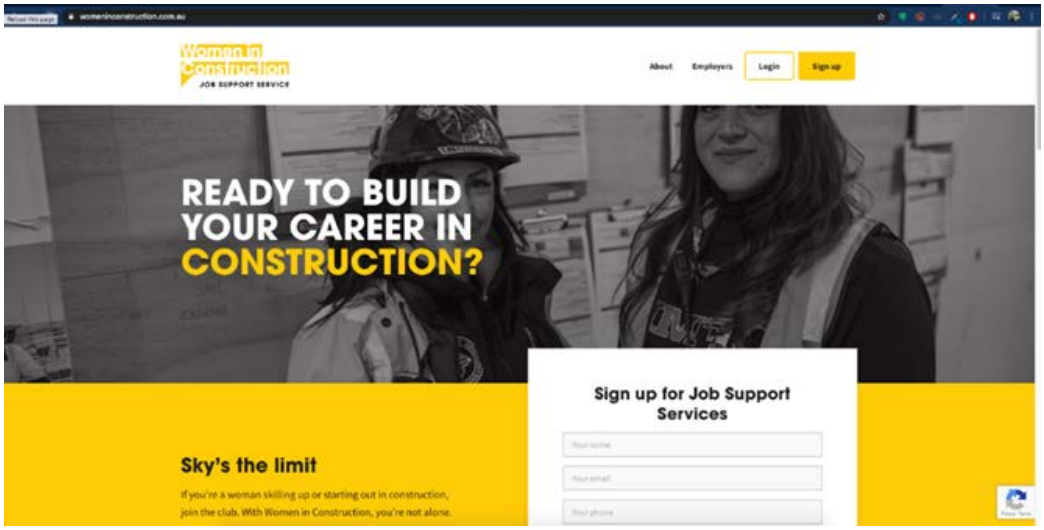


Figure 9: Screenshot of the website portal for female jobseekers

The portal also had an employer page allowing employers to share potential job opportunities. This is shown in Figure 10.

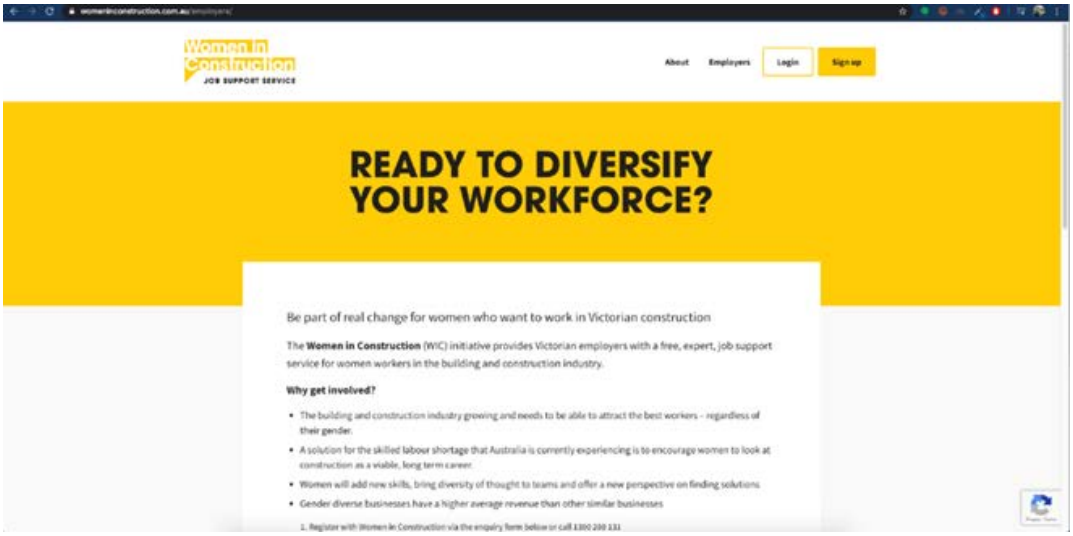


Figure 10: Screenshot of the website portal for prospective employers

The interviews revealed that there had not been a major promotional effort to advertise the portal and the services being offered to potential job seekers. The staff members mentioned that Incolink is well known in the industry, and most of the women who have joined the Incolink support program have come through referrals from Incolink's network and contacts in the industry and within various unions. Some initial promotional work was, however, undertaken at several union and industry events. In addition, some marketing materials were created to promote the concept of a job support service in the construction industry. Refer Figure 11. These materials were aimed at both women seeking employment and prospective employers.



Figure 11: Worker Registration information and Employer information flyers

In terms of the women who joined the program, considerable success was gained through these channels. As of June 2021, Incolink report that a total of 67 women had signed up for the job support services. Of these, 30 women remained unemployed, 27 women were employed but not in roles of their interest/choice, and ten women had been successfully placed in apprenticeships or full-time roles.

A further breakdown revealed that out of these ten women who had gained employment – four were placed in Cranes Traineeship at the CFMMEU, two were already qualified electricians who had gained full-time roles, one had gained a painting apprenticeship with an all-woman painting company, and the remaining three gained carpentry apprenticeships.

There is a dearth of private construction companies expressing any interest in hiring female workers. An Incolink staff member expressed it as "a problematic bottleneck" on the demand side. So, while women were demonstrating career interest, their employment in any role or in a role that interested them was low, at less than 15 per cent.

The current placement of women is done informally through internal channels and contacts. There is no formal flow of prospective employers into the program. The Incolink staff members believe that the key to the ongoing success of the strategy would be to tackle this issue – and adopt a formal approach to encourage employer buy-ins.

> *And my understanding is this strategy going forward will have a position or a person or a resource that will be responsible for creating a pipeline of employer interests for the system. But for our position, what we do is, what we do internally… we do what we can, it's all very informal.*

The staff members also mentioned that COVID-19 had been a considerable obstacle and had derailed their plans. On the one hand, this added to the number of women seeking employment (as many women lost their casual work), and on the other, it made it harder to garner support from prospective employers.

> *The frustrating part is that we had COVID! And we haven't necessarily had that job pipeline for them [the women] to go through. So, a lot of the girls are very frustrated that they just can't … you know, work.*

Job support officer and support outcomes

While COVID-19 hampered the key aspect of the program in providing women with employment opportunities that were in line with their skills and interests, it heightened the importance of the well-being services and counselling support services offered.

The job support officer's position was created as a part of the support program. Given the lack of a formal employment system, a crucial part of the support officer's role was to use her contacts in the union and otherwise to secure employment opportunities for the jobseekers. Through these channels that 10 out of 67 women were placed in apprenticeships, traineeships, or full-time roles.

The support officer has also been providing career counselling to the participants, offering them various pathways into apprenticeships, helping them get job-ready (with resume building or skill development), and more generally encouraging and supporting them through what can be a difficult job-hunting phase.

> *I think the success would be in that they [the women] have known that there's someone at the end of the phone that's ready to listen, to hear what they've got [to say].*

The appointment of a dedicated support officer has spearheaded a more personal approach; it has led to one-on-one interventions with the women so that they feel heard and supported. The support that is extended does not stop when a woman gains employment. The support officer keeps in touch to track their progress and their well-being on a regular basis.

> *Like today, I've been ringing the women that have been in employment to see whether 1. they are still in employment, 2. how are they going, and 3. whether they need more support. So sometimes a lot of the women are so busy and caught up in their own lives and, they've got things going on their own lives, they forget about that we are here! So, it's just a reminder to say – "Hey, I'm here, if you do fall out of employment, give me a call, see what we can do for you".*

6.4 Experiences of female jobseekers

There were five key themes identified in the interviews with the participants:



Figure 12: Research Themes

Apart from these themes, the women mentioned that their participation in the Incolink support program was from their own initiative, and they had not seen much advertisement about it. Several women, already in construction but seeking alternative roles, mentioned that they had seen advertisements and assumed jobs were available. They had spoken to other women at their workplace but felt that not many people knew about the program.

Career change: motivation and requirements

All the participants interviewed for this evaluation had been working in another industry before joining the construction industry. It was apparent that they had tried different careers, but their choices were not a good match for them. Some had been in traditionally female occupations, others involved in more gender-neutral areas, and some in occupations more closely linked to construction. The younger participants mentioned that their decision to enter the construction industry was guided by a desire to work with their hands, not be in an office job or do something "fun" and "cool".

> *….. it was the same four walls every single day.*

> *I'm better in working with tools that I would be on a computer.*

For the relatively older participants, making more money and becoming financially secure was a key motivator.

> *Work is out of necessity for someone like me. It is not just cash for extra spending money like some other girls. I have to feed my children!*

This was not surprising as the older women had more responsibilities like their rent, schooling of their children, and so on. Many mentioned their housing situation and that they "wanted to buy a house eventually". They had also experienced some difficult, and in several cases exploitative workplaces, and wanted a change. Overall, despite working hard, they expressed concern for the future and the need to earn money.

Some women mentioned that they had joined the Incolink support program when they were in the middle of a career transition and had required career counselling. They wanted to know more about the various pathways available to them and the corresponding skills required. These participants unequivocally agreed that the Incolink job support officer's assistance had been very helpful in making this transition. The support officer had discussed their interests, the types of trades and pathways available, and pointed them to get the right skills. This was in the form of various tickets and certifications.

> *She [Job Support Officer] told me about different aspects of carpentry and painting. She helped me make a choice, and I am very happy!*

Frustration with the lack of job opportunities and traffic as the only inroad into construction

While participants were appreciative of the support extended to get them job-ready, they were frustrated with the lack of job opportunities that were available to them. Several mentioned that they thought there were jobs already lined up and the frustrations associated with this. One woman commented:

> *I actually saw it advertised in the CFMEU magazine, and it said, we're trying to get more women in construction, so give us a call …. but like a year later, and they've*

> *never once phoned me saying there might be a job. ….. like every couple of months, I get a phone call and I think, oh well, maybe she's phoning me about a job, but it's never about a job.*

Participants revealed that it was challenging to find jobs. A recurring theme amongst those who were employed was that they were only able to get traffic-related work. Some of the older participants were frustrated with the long search for a position that suited their interests and skills.

Traffic work was mentioned as a way to get into the industry, and women felt hiring was based on networks and contacts. Most of the participants were engaged in acquiring more skills and getting more tickets but considered their employment depended on 'who' you know rather than 'what' you know.

> *Traffic was my last option.… I wanted to be on site. I wanted to operate the crane and all that but for that, your dad needs to be onsite, and he needs to know the superintendent… a lot of contacts are needed. Connections are very important.*

> *It is just apply, apply and apply… I just did a traffic management ticket and got into traffic instead because I had no luck with the other tickets.*

Further, the participants in the traffic work mentioned that it was primarily casual and offered them no job stability. In most cases, the women got messages the night before a job the following morning. Since work was limited and sporadic, there was a tendency to take on as many hours as possible when there was a demand for traffic workers. This had negatively impacted women's physical bodies and their work-life balance.

COVID-related problems

An extension to the above theme was women's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Women reported feeling depressed and hopeless during the pandemic as most experienced either longer or shorter terms of unemployment. There was significant uncertainty as site rules regarding COVID-19 changed relating to how many people could be on site. Most of the women had casual jobs so were out of work or on reduced hours during different stages and phases of state-wide lockdowns. Those who were looking for employment faced an increasingly difficult time in getting any response from employers. Some expressed relief as they gained some casual employment in non-construction roles; however, many had little income. This was very much in line with what had been reported by the Incolink staff members as well.

> *It was a very bad time. It [COVID-19] was very bad. A lot of people… pretty much everyone who was casual, was left with no work. No work at all.*

While the organisers of the support program were also struggling to find employment for the participants (as reported by the Incolink staff members), they could extend mental health support

and financial aid to those who needed it the most. Access was provided to Incolink counselling services, which was commented upon by a few participants.

Only one participant reported a positive aspect to the COVID-19 pandemic – that by being unemployed, they could think more about what role they really wanted to pursue. This participant was younger and perhaps did not have as many financial pressures. They have now entered into training and employment in their preferred field.

> *And then COVID hit, so it kind of slowed down the process, but again, a bit more time to think about what I really wanted to do.*

Impact of job support officer

All the interviewed participants mentioned that they were very happy to have other related support from Incolink. In particular, the job support officer's role in extending career advice, counselling, and more generally lending an ear to the women was mentioned and appreciated by all the participants.

> *I know she [Incolink job support officer] is keeping an eye out for me … unfortunately, it is just a waiting game. But it is nice to have someone touch base once in a while.*

Younger participants were more optimistic about their career prospects in the construction industry. They had not planned too far ahead and did not have any fixed ideas about what they wanted to do within the industry. Regarding expectations from the Incolink support program, the career-related advice, counselling and emotional support were sufficient for them.

> *They were willing to support me and have my back and that was awesome to hear. It was like a safety net. Two pretty cool women behind me, supporting me and wanting to see me succeed… what more can I want?*

The older participants were warier of the whole process. They appreciated the regular check-ins and the emotional support but were frustrated with the lack of job opportunities. They knew that getting the right job meant having the right contacts. Their expectation from the Incolink support program was that they would overcome this hurdle and find stable employment through the organisation's support.

> *The support is great, but there are no jobs! She [Incolink job support officer] calls me regularly, but it's never about a job… it's always more of "I'm just touching base".*

The need for stable, full-time employment

All the women who were interviewed mentioned that their ultimate goal was to find stable, full-time work. Many had come to a stage in their lives where they wanted a greater level of certainty. The unreliability of casual work had become more pronounced due to the pandemic. They wanted

permanent jobs in line with their skills and to earn a decent income to support themselves and their families.

> *I'm definitely looking for a full-time permanent position with* [retracted due to possible participant identification].
>
> *I have worked all my life, and I don't like not having money…! I do crazy hours in traffic because you can't say no to the work when it comes.*

As noted earlier, many were well qualified but could not gain employment in the fields they had trained in. Half the women had already transitioned into construction and had joined the Incolink program to get help to gain a new role. Many were in traffic management positions they had often acquired due to familial ties. Most were highly qualified but did not have the level of work experience needed. Many were quite philosophical about this and continued to gain further qualifications in the hope of breaking out of the traffic management role and into something more stable.

> *It's like anything, they [prospective employers] want experience, and I can totally understand that.*

Unlike apprenticeships, which provide on site experience, tickets in forklift, for example, do not include site experience. This lack of experience appears to be a significant barrier. Perhaps men can gain experience more easily than women, or perhaps a higher standard is expected of women or by the women of themselves. They expressed interest in many roles but had yet to be successful.

> *I did a diploma in* [retracted due to possible participant identification] *and that takes a year. I was hoping to eventually be on site! I don't know when that will happen, and traffic is just a make-do thing for now.*

Most women had left a job in another industry to join the construction industry, hoping to engage in enjoyable work that would provide them with a steady source of income. However, these women found themselves in mostly casual, traffic-related work despite adding an increasing number of tickets to their skill set. They were frustrated that it was a matter of knowing the right person, and most expected the Incolink support program to help them into the industry. All remained relatively positive about their choice of construction, and several mentioned that they enjoyed working with men on site.

6.5 Overall findings and recommendations

This evaluation found that the Incolink support program has been an important source of emotional and sometimes financial support to women seeking a career in the construction industry. Sixty-seven women enrolled in the program; however, 30 are still unemployed and 27 employed in roles not matching their preferred job choice. Ten women, mostly younger, have been successfully placed in apprenticeships or full-time roles.

The female participants and the Incolink staff members are frustrated with the lack of support from prospective employers, which the COVID-19 situation has worsened. This has increased uncertainty for all workers, including those in the program, with women in casual positions experiencing unemployment. For the program to work effectively, there must be qualified and willing women on the one side and supportive employers on the other. The employer element is currently absent, with the Incolink staff hampered in their efforts and forced to rely solely on their own resources and networks.

The support program has helped provide women with career advice, assisting them in increasing their skills, helping them with their resumes, and give them emotional support. Most of the women interviewed who were (or had been) in traffic management roles had qualifications beyond that role. Securing jobs more in line with their qualifications was harder than expected as the support from potential employers did not match Incolink's expectations. As Incolink staff reflected:

> *We can offer them support; we can offer them well-being …. but really what they want us to provide them with is a pathway to employment. I think that would be the key element.*
>
> *You can do everything you want, create all of these systems and processes and support but if you don't have the employers providing the jobs, it's going to be a major issue.*

Comparing the responses of the participants and the Incolink staff members reveals that there is no gap in the actual lived experiences of the women and the understanding of the situation on Incolink's part. Incolink staff members were well aware of the problems that women are facing and their needs. For instance, the Incolink staff member mentioned how the number of women employed in traffic management was not indicative of the number of women in the employment of their choice.

> *Women need stable employment… they need good inroads into the construction area. So, a lot of the women are doing traffic management at the moment and not necessarily wanting to do that. But it's the foot in the door for them. And it's all done through labour-hire companies. So, what we need is more sustainable, stable employment and more security for these females.*

This need for long-term stable employment was particularly evident when speaking with the Incolink support officer about the older cohort.

> *What are we going to do with all this older cohort? … they have got these licences but not necessarily, you know, have had the experience. Or they've had the experience and are just not getting a go anymore? I'm finding that one of the major barriers with this role is getting the older ladies into work.*

None of the women interviewed spoke in a derogatory manner about the industry. All spoke positively about their experiences with their work colleagues, with none openly disclosing any

incidences of disrespect. The Incolink support officer also corroborated this. They commented on the resilience of these women even when facing uncertainty.

> *And even when I call them and say, 'Hey, how are you going' and you know they appreciate the call, but I can hear it in their voice that they [are a] bit dejected, but they still got that fight in them. They say, 'I really want to do this, I love the industry, I want to stay in the industry, I work well with the blokes, and they treat me well'.*

Much of the work for the women had come through labour-hire companies or word of mouth. The informal recruitment practices appear to disadvantage a majority of women, with the exception of some women who gained employment due to family connections. It is not fully understood if it disadvantages women seeking 'better' positions, but the general feedback from the participants and Incolink staff would support this notion. Therefore, the informal recruitment practices and the use of labour-hire companies overall appear to be limiting women's opportunities, and a gender and age bias may be in place. It would appear that the typical pre-retirement or "finishing" roles assigned to men, such as traffic and Allimak operator, are both the starting and finishing careers for women seeking an on site career. This additional layer of discrimination for women is concerning.

> *A lot of the women, the older women, will say, well, these younger women are getting these jobs.... you know, the pretty faces, and I'm not getting a look in.*

Recommendations

Based on the above information, the following recommendations are made:

1. The support program was successful in providing both emotional support and career guidance to the women who enrolled. This support was valued and has assisted women to persevere in seeking suitable employment. It is recommended that it should continue.
2. A critical part of the program was having jobs available for women. Women believed jobs were available, but many remain unemployed or employed in precarious jobs or jobs of less interest to them. While the COVID-19 pandemic remains a big barrier, increasing employers' engagement and support from labour-hire companies must be prioritised for the program to successfully continue.
3. Lack of work experience appears to be one factor affecting trained women from gaining employment. While apprenticeships integrate training and job experience, this option is not financially viable for many older women. Future programs should proactively explore ways to help women gain the work experience they need for more stable employment.
4. Women were undertaking training but still unable to secure suitable employment. It is unclear how much of this is due to COVID-related issues, recruitment issues, or a skills

deficit. A closer review should be undertaken into these barriers so that the program can better address them.

5. Women expressed an interest in meeting other women (in similar situations) and having an industry-based mentor. It is recommended that this be considered in future programs.
6. The program provided guidance regarding different career pathways, tickets, resume building, etc. It is recommended that this aspect of the program be expanded, and stronger ties fostered with subcontractors and labour-hire companies to understand specific shortfalls, best training options for women, and recruitment practices.
7. The program could develop into a unique scheme for women to gain employment and experience, and a resource for employers wanting to attract female workers. Once employers are more engaged, a stronger effort should be made to advertise the program. As, this initiative also overlaps with issues surrounding the recruitment and retention of women, future iterations of the program could be expanded to cover women's engagement in the industry at different points in their careers and address all three domains.

7. THE RECRUITMENT STANDARDS

7.1 Overview

ACTIONS

Recruitment Standards

- Study a sample group of employers to identify current recruitment practices.
- Prepare standards based on findings.
- Develop checklist tools for implementation of standards.

The Victorian Building and Construction Recruitment Standards (VBCRS) were originally conceived to “build the capacity of major builders, subcontractors and labour hire operators to attract and recruit women into the full range of trade and semi-skilled roles within the industry”. The focus was then modified to include all women in the industry. Counteracting the informal recruitment practices within the construction industry, which are known to disadvantage women, was the primary driver for this work. A copy of the standards and guidance notes are provided in Appendix A. The MBV led this work on behalf of the BICC.

OVERALL FINDING

All companies were not fully supportive of the standards and guidance notes in their current form. Their evaluation of both effectiveness and ease of implementation was not high and the ability of companies of less than 80 employees to comply questioned. Companies considered the standards and accompanying guidance verbose, unnecessarily complex and challenging to comprehend. A part of this was related to their unfamiliarity with HR terminology and the potential for backlash or implementation to become a "tick the box" exercise was raised.

Most companies supported gender equity in construction, and many would welcome a resource to improve gender equity, so continuing work in this area and testing the standards within industry is supported. The use of more commonplace language, simplification and modified activities tailored to suit companies without HR resources is advised. The guidance notes could more explicitly address senior appointments, internal promotions, project-based staff assignments, casual project-based construction workers and labour-hire company recruitment and allocation processes. Finally, a scheme with accountability and different classification levels may distinguish those doing well and those just beginning. Incentivising implementation may work well with the competitive nature of the construction environment.

7.2 Evaluation approach

Background

Recruitment is “the process of searching for and appointment of new staff to join a company” (Ivanovic and Collin, 2009, page 219). Recruitment practices for skilled construction trades and professional roles have been found to be primarily informal, which differs from those used in other industries (Bridges et al., 2020). Informal practices can both advantage and disadvantage different groups, and because of this, they are not considered good practice. Career paths in the trades and professional areas in construction often rely on social connections and "word of mouth" recommendations. These informal recruitment processes have been cited as one of the key barriers to women being recruited in trades and other construction roles (Bridges et al., 2020). The purpose of a recruitment policy, standard or guidelines is to promote consistency, transparency, compliance and adherence to employment laws and other company policies and attempt to counteract all forms of discrimination in recruitment.

Methods

Key informant interviews and interviews with managers involved in recruitment decisions were used in the evaluation of the recruitment standards. Key informant interviews were held with two participants involved in the development of the standards. An interview protocol was developed which focused on:

- The process for the development of the standards
- The proposed use of the standards

A further twelve interviews were held with managers from ten construction companies to gain their feedback on the proposed recruitment standards. The results are presented from a company perspective. The interview protocol developed for the industry interviews covered:

- Current recruitment practices
- Use and benefit of the draft recruitment standards
- Effectiveness and ease of implementation of each standard

As a number of resources relating to the area of recruitment already exist, they were considered in relation to the developed recruitment standards. They include:

Gender equality strategy guide (WGEA) (https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019_WGEA_GE_Strategy_Guide.pdf)

Gender strategy toolkit (WGEA) (https://www.wgea.gov.au/tools/gender-strategy-toolkit#download-the-full-guide)

Gender equality diagnostic tool (WGEA) (https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019_WGEA_GE_Diagnostic_Tool_0.pdf)

Gender equitable recruitment and promotion (WGEA) (https://www.wgea.gov.au/tools/recruitment-and-promotion-guide)

AS 5376-2012 Gender-inclusive job evaluation and grading (https://infostore.saiglobal.com/en-au/standards/as-5376-2012-126672_saig_as_as_267402/)

Guide to Australian Standards on gender-inclusive job evaluation grading (WGEA). (https://www.wgea.gov.au/tools/guide-to-australian-standards-on-gender-inclusive-job-evaluation)

Recruit Smarter (Vic Government) (https://www.vic.gov.au/recruit-smarter)

Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy (Vic Government) (https://www.vic.gov.au/safe-and-strong-victorian-gender-equality)

FairWork Best Practice Guides and other tools (https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/best-practice-guides)

Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies (Australian Human Rights Commission 2013) (https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/WIMDI_Toolkit_2013.pdf)

Given that half of the companies interviewed referred to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) reporting requirements, as well as the WGEA Gender Equality Strategy and Gender Equality Diagnostic Tool, those specific documents has been referred to within the discussion on the standards.

7.3 The development of the recruitment standards

Overview

The standards for the BICC were developed by the MBV, who engaged an external consultant to undertake the work. The MBV explained that these standards were deliberately written as "an aspirational document making explicit what best practice looks like in gender diverse and inclusive construction organisations". In addition, MBVs understand of the work was that they were:,

> *….. doing the first part of a two part project. We would look at the current situation; survey companies and find out what their current situation was in relation to this area; use that information to develop a draft set of Standards and draft associated information, including a checklist.*

The MBV consultant selected was well suited for the task and held a Master in Human Resources Management. In addition, they had thirty years of experience in recruitment, organisational development, business strategy and business development, and expertise in education and training. Their unique experience included knowledge of the construction industry, and they had previously developed a course titled '*Advancing Women in Construction*' for the construction industry. Their role was to study a sample group of employers in order to identify current recruitment practices. Then based on these findings, prepare a set of recruitment standards along

with checklist tools. The consultant noted that through their own extensive research, they developed the aspects of the standards "And then I suppose from my knowledge I was able to bring that in together". The other interviewee noted that the main difference between these recruitment standards and others that may exist, such as the WGEA Guidance strategy, was that the terminology was more relevant and accessible to construction companies. Once a draft was completed, it was issued to the BICC for comment. Only minimal feedback was received. The MBV noted one company stated, "No further comments from us, the material looks comprehensive and user friendly" and another noted they wanted to see:

> *……. changes in use of language ('women' not 'female'); stronger emphasis in our wording on several areas including "Culture and gendered violence workplace training programs for ALL levels of a company's structure – regardless of size; Stronger wording around commitments to building a skilled workforce.*

The MBV incorporated the feedback, and the documents were then supplied in the BICC Word Template. The MBV consultant noted it was not part of their brief to present the developed standards back to the industry. They also noted that they had received advice that Stage 2 (roll-out) will commence in 2021 and this was confirmed by the MBV. The consultant hoped to pilot the standards on a project by obtaining the 'buy-in' from a Head Contractor and then use as many sub-contractors on that site as possible. The MBV stated:

> *A new and separate project to test the Standards will start in July 2021 with three businesses in a pilot project. The project will take nine months in acknowledgement of the time required for organisations to embed the Standards in their organisations. The Recruitment Standards will be updated to reflect feedback from the participating pilot organisations when this second project of the WIC Strategy Intervention 2: Recruitment is completed.*

This is a separate project from the one being evaluated, and will be used for:

> *Feedback and updates as the Draft Recruitment Standards will be assessed 'in the field' rather than hypothetically.*

The MBV noted that it was always their intention to undertaken industry testing and this next project will look specifically address implementation issues and industry resources.

Report on Existing Recruitment Practices

Approach

The first part of the BICC work was to identify current recruitment practices, and this included interviews with a range of employers and female employees. It was reported that seven

employer interviews[10] were conducted. The interview questions were extensive and covered the following five categories:

- Business strategy – 5 questions
- Recruitment strategy and practices – 17 questions
- Gender diversity strategy and practices – 8 questions
- Metrics and reporting – 7 questions
- Women quotas and targets – 4 questions

In addition, the MBV consultant undertook interviews with four female employees[11] and these interviews covered:

- Career journey – 1 question
- Industry value proposition and attraction – 6 questions
- Employee value proposition – 9 questions
- Organisational culture, behaviour and performance – 8 questions

The Recruitment practices in the Victorian Construction Industry: Report was based these interviews, national and international work in the area as well as the MBV consultant's knowledge. The MBV approached around thirty companies but only seven agreed to be interviewed. Four women, known to the MBV consultant, were also interviewed. While the number of interviews fell short of what the MBV preferred they did, however, cover a range companies types representative of the industry. The consultant also recognised it is an area with a lot of existing information. They noted:

> *A huge amount of work [has been] done with the Victorian government. So that's a great thing about recruitment. So, there was whole mass of things that I looked at. [MBV Consultant]*

The findings and change drivers were presented in an appendix of the report, and the report itself listed many wide-ranging recommendations. These went broader than the specific area of recruitment and into numerous aspects relating to the non-inclusion of women in the industry. The MBV consultant felt it was essential to find "the things that were creating the issue in the first place". This reflected their broader view on recruitment matters "So recruitment to me is awareness, selection, recruiting. It's the whole life cycle". As the report noted:

> *Modern recruitment is most effective when business strategy, capability requirements and sound policies and practices are coupled with the stages of the employee lifecycle*

[10] 1 Tier 1, 1 Tier 2, 2 x subcontractors, 1 labour-hire, 1 residential builder and 1 residential subcontractor
[11] 2 x Tier 2, 1 subcontractor and 1 labour-hire

> *(attraction, application and interviewing, selection and onboarding, development, retention and exiting).* (Page 5)

The recommendations were also extensive and ranged from the need for industry commitment to inclusion to changes required to physical fitness programs at schools. They were grouped under six distinct themes:

- Theme One: Government legislation, policy and practice – 10 recommendations
- Theme Two: Socio-economic factors – 1 recommendation
- Theme Three: Industry image and leadership – 5 recommendations
- Theme Four: Attraction and supply – 8 recommendations
- Theme Five: Organisational factors – 7 recommendations
- Theme Six: Individual factors – 12 recommendations

The consultant's report reflected the findings of the evaluation interviews that the industry was yet to embrace modern human resource management strategies. As the report stated:

> *….. the organisational systems infrastructure including recruitment practices was ad hoc and informal. Human Resource information technology was rarely utilised across the companies surveyed. Few companies employed a Human Resource expert and where they did, those personnel were often overextended. Recruitment responsibilities were more likely to fall to personnel such as construction managers, operational staff, payroll administrators and site supervisors, with little training in modern recruitment methods.* (Page 5)

The industry's current practices were not focused on the long term and were resistant to change, with perhaps an inability to enact change due to entrenched habits. As the report noted:

> *…. few businesses were practising future-proofing... This creates a business (and industry) lethargy and imperviousness to change. In addition, many workers in the industry (from Directors to operational workers) had been in the industry for a considerable length of time, with engrained behaviours and values. (Page 3)*

Apart from a few companies, "most recruitment strategies consisted of waiting for candidates to come to them" (Page 31). Current recruitment practices of site-based roles were found to be the responsibility of the managers and supervisors. The report also noted:

> *….. most recruitment policies were ad hoc with little evaluation or reporting on who was employed and why. Coordinators and supervisors tended to pick those with perceived higher physical aptitude for operational work (males). In many of the surveyed companies, those tasked with interviewing were hiring by 'gut feel' and there was potential for unconscious bias to slip into the recruitment process. This meant that hiring quality candidates was somewhat hit and miss.* (Page 39)

The report highlighted many factors that mitigate any industry change, including the increased employment of women in trade and other on site roles. While companies regarded themselves as welcoming and encouraging concerning women's employment, their low representation was put down to the fact that women were not available, did not apply, and there was an oversupply of male candidates seen as more appropriate. A distinct gender bias within the industry was found concerning the physicality of work, the need to change work practices, the limiting effect of the EBAs and women not being assertive or resilient.

> *The unconscious bias, that women lacked the physicality to perform operational work, was rife and persistent. Businesses were more comfortable in increasing the physical ability of male apprentices rather than women apprentices and felt there would need to be modifications made for women in the manual labour aspects of apprenticeship and operational work.* (Page 3)

While companies made more efforts to employ professional women and seemed more accepting and supportive of their employment, these women's lack of assertiveness and confidence was also cited as problematic.

> *Several respondents stated that professional women would be taken more seriously if they had training in commercial acumen and could articulate where they could add value to the business.* (Page 4)

The report identified that few companies have formal diversity strategies, though some had Equal Employment Opportunity policies. While some advances in terms of "ethnicity" had been made, it was "difficult to sell the business case to leaders for proactively increasing participation of women workers in their businesses" (Page 36). The attention paid to gender diversity data was less to do with being a proactive company and more about compliance issues and information for tenders. In addition, those considering improving their gender diversity were constrained and more limited to larger enterprises.

> *Where companies were considering improving their gender diversity and inclusion practices, they felt their company had insufficient change management expertise to deal with the fallout from implementing changes. Generally, it was easier for a larger business with greater reserves of resources (both financial and personnel) to cause and implement change.* (Page 5)

The sense that companies considered themselves welcoming, without any bias in recruitment, was embedded in a system that had little intention to change the status quo or implement new initiatives. The adequate supply of male workers for on site roles meant from an organisational sense "… there is no pressure or reason to change the balance of the genders at present" (Page 31).

The case for recruitment standards can be summed up as follows "Without formal policies, unconscious biases can easily be left unchecked, especially if adherence to protocols was loosely defined and left up to managerial discretion" (Page 39). The consultant advised that the primary

aim of the standards was to remove the informal recruitment practices within the construction industry, which are seen as a disadvantage to increasing the number of women in the industry. The report concluded that:

> *The building and construction industry are self-limiting access to the supply of talented and diverse candidates through unconscious bias, entrenched assumptions and informal recruitment practices. Industry must recognise and acknowledge that there is [a] gender discrimination issue that pervades from corporate offices to construction sites. It is no longer the time for piecemeal and incremental approaches to change – action needs to be transformational, concerted, intelligent, collaborative and multipronged* (Page 5)

Summary

From an industry perspective, most problems relating to the shortage of women appeared to lie with either a lack of women or shortcomings of the women themselves. A culture resistant to change, happy with the status quo and unaware of any gender biases within current recruitment was found. In addition, EBAs were identified as restrictive on companies and individuals through their imposition of rigid work practices. While the industry stated that they wanted the best possible workforce, it was clear that women were not considered as a "solution" but more of a "problem". Differences between professional and site-based roles were noted. However, the discussion on current recruitment practices, in the traditional sense of being a process, was relatively brief. This perhaps came from the apparent lack of formal processes or policies, but no differences were cited between the recruitment practices within the labour-hire companies, subcontracting firms and building companies. From this, it would be assumed that the practices are similar. Aspects of the report relate specifically to resistance to change from current recruitment, and no one seemed to consider current recruitment practices as problematic, biased or not achieving the best results.

The interviews held for this evaluation found similar results to this report. However, some of the companies approached for the evaluation presented the impression of being more willing to change. It was, however, apparent that the industry may do little to change in terms of gender equity unless it is an imposed requirement. The consultant regarded the recruitment standards as an avenue of change that would be linked to procurement within the government. They also considered the industry needed education and promotion in order to encourage their acceptance. It is understood that this forms part of the next stage of the MBV work in this area. In the longer term, they expected the standards would be compulsory across the whole of the construction industry. The consultant saw the recruitment standards as a step towards "a capability maturity model". They noted that the standards were to be used in both male and female recruitment and in trade, labour-hire and professional employment, despite the initial BICC action being focused on trade and semi-skilled roles.

7.4 Industry Evaluation

For this evaluation, over twenty companies were approached, with ten companies agreeing to participate. In total, twelve individuals were interviewed, with all having significant responsibility for recruitment within their organisation. The interviews were conducted from April to July 2021. Of the twelve interviews, only one was undertaken at the company's office and due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time social distancing was maintained. All others were conducted via Zoom.

All companies were emailed a copy of the VBCRS Recruitment Standards, and VBCRS Guidance notes for their company size before the interview to ascertain their opinions. Two versions of the guidance notes were available, one for small companies[12] and one for medium and large companies[13]. The guidance notes included the materials contained in the Standards, but both documents were referred to during the interviews. Throughout the interviews, the standards were referred to as the "Draft Standards" at the suggestion of the MBV consultant, however they were not noted as such in the documents themselves.

The interviews started by looking at current recruitment processes and how they address gender diversity. Their overall views of the standards, including the effectiveness of standards and ease of implementation of suggested activities/tools, was then investigated.

Company profiles

Of the ten companies interviewed, only four companies had a separate Human Resource (HR) department and, for two of these, that consisted of a single person in the role of an HR Manager/Officer. Interestingly, it was not the largest four who had an HR function which indicates this is not necessarily dictated by company size but company policy. The companies ranged from less than ten employees to over 500 employees. Six companies were primarily involved in commercial construction, with three having a greater focus on residential construction. The remaining company concentrated more on infrastructure and engineering projects, but someone in the building section was interviewed. There were three companies with less than 10 per cent female workforce, and the remaining had up to 20 per cent women. There was a tendency for a higher female representation to exist in companies with a HR function. Three companies had currently, or historically, employed women in site positions. Even so, these were only a handful of positions over the ten companies.

Further details regarding each company are shown in Table 12.

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[12] The Australian Bureau of Statistics considers a small business to be less than 19 employees and includes:
Non-employing businesses (sole proprietorships and partnerships without employees)
Micro-businesses (businesses employing between 1 and 4 people including non-employing businesses)
Other small businesses (businesses that employ between 5 and 19 employees) less than 20 employees,

[13] The ABS defines a medium sized business as employing between 20 and 199 employees while large businesses employ 200 or more employees.

Table 12: Company Details.

Company	Typical projects	Role	Size	Female representation	Employ Direct Site Workers?
1	Residential	Owner	< 20	0%	Yes - Nearly all employees
2	Residential	Director	20 – 50	6 – 10%	Yes - small[14]
3	Commercial & Residential	Commercial Manager	50 – 100	16 – 20%	No
4	Commercial	Director	50 – 100	11 – 15%	Yes – v small
5	Commercial & Residential	HR Manager	50 – 100	11 – 15%	No
6	Commercial & Residential	Construction Manager x 2	100 – 250	11 – 15%	Yes – medium
7	Commercial & Residential	HR Manager	> 250	16 – 20%	Yes – v small
8	Commercial & Residential	Director & HR Manager	> 250	6 - 10%	Yes – v small
9	Engineering & Commercial	Construction Manager	> 250	16 – 20%	Yes – v small in building section
10	Commercial & Residential	Construction Manager	50 - 100	11 – 15%	Yes - small

Recruitment and current recruitment practices

After gaining a better understanding of participant roles and a profile of the companies, the participants were asked about how they usually recruit employees, current recruitment policies and hiring practices. Recruitment decisions in the construction industry were considered to be generally higher than in other industries due to the project nature of the work undertaken. Head contractors noted that they only directly employ some site operatives such as cleaners, Alimak drivers, OHS reps, and traffic controllers. They considered site managers the same ways as other professional staff. Professional and administrative staff were recruited using processes which ranged from informal to formal. Excluding the residential companies, only one company directly employed more than a handful of site workers, of which two were women. None of the residential builders employed women in site worker roles, and less than half had women in a construction worker role. Only one company employed no women at all, with the rest employing from 6 to 20% women.

The larger company, which recruited more site operatives than its counterparts, recruited these individuals using the same process to employ other administrative and professional staff, which while not strictly formal had a specific known process. Otherwise, the site-based operatives were typically employed by their direct line manager on-site rather than through head office in all other companies. Labour hire firms were used to cover shorter-term requirements, with their selection

[14] Very small was just a handful of employees or less than 2% of all employees overall, Small was up to 10 employees but less than 5% of all employees overall, Medium was up to 20% of all employees.

left to the site manager's discretion and information provided by the Labour hire company. Past work experience and suitability for the role were prime considerations in these decisions.

The majority of site operatives come to a project from subcontractors who directly or indirectly employ workers. These subcontractors range in size right down to sole business owners. They have permanent staff employed through processes that vary in formality, depending on company size and internal processes. They are also employed casually on an as-needed basis. These individuals were often “people on their books”.

Regarding professional and administrative staff, the companies interviewed with a HR department had more formal recruitment practices and more policies, but they also recruited through informal networks - both when seeking new employees and hiring those who “cold called”. Those companies without a formal recruitment policy nevertheless used a standard approach for recruitment, which included approaches on how to consider uninvited employment requests. We have a “set of standard questions we use”. More formal procedures were used for graduate and administrative positions. Less formal were senior appointments and site-based roles. However, all senior appointments were stringently assessed, and often more than one interview was arranged for each candidate. After consulting others and reviewing projects, management would determine what professional and managerial positions they needed. This could occur at a separate resource meeting.

The process varied depending on if they are approached, heard of a high-quality contender or advertised directly.

> *If there’s a quality candidate, we’ll then interview and if we see them as a good fit and the business can foresee into the future the need, then we’ll directly engage.*

Even when they advertised for professional, managerial or administrative staff as a company or via a recruitment agency, the process could still involve applicants recommended by other staff. Typically, a role description would be developed, particularly if HR was involved, and an advertising campaign determined, often using SEEK, LinkedIn or headhunting through existing networks. The HR person will:

> *…. coordinates all of the interviews, she has all recruitment correspondence and questionnaires and interview documentation. She will do the reference checking. She is the central point of managing the entire process.*

Regardless of the company's size or sector, personal recommendations, social media, informal networks, and universities were often used to identify potential professional and managerial candidates. If this is not successful, then companies would then advertise on LinkedIn or SEEK or look to recruit through recruitment firms with whom they have previously established an ongoing relationship. The companies without internal HR personnel were more likely to use these external consultants for professional and managerial appointments. Apart from the smallest residential company, they all kept a record of their recruitments, including the number of applicants,

evaluation criteria/considerations, and time to appoint for each recruitment. If an individual was targeted from a pre-existing relationship with someone in the company, that person would often remain the contact during the process.

Internal recruitment and promotion decisions for professional and managerial staff often depended on the project nature of work and the tendency to mould and develop their staff for more senior roles. There was a tendency for companies to identify professional talent early and provide more opportunities to those seen to have potential. The HR managers did discuss this, as well as how they looked more holistically at individuals' professional career and attempted to influence project team selection. In many incidences, project managers selected their own site office teams for a project. The development of work experience and subsequent promotion were often considered, with some companies appearing to take a more proactive approach to develop a more rounded experience for existing professional staff, particularly graduates and those considered for future leadership positions.

Internal promotions of professional staff could vary in formality and senior appointments processes could occur without any external advertising. As stated, companies often identified talent with leadership potential early and actively sought to upskill these individuals. They were often identified first for promotional opportunities. Therefore, not being identified early would appear to hinder both male and female potential. If not filled internally, senior management roles could be filled through the use of cold calling, proactively approaching external talent or using external recruitment consultants. The use of these consultants depended on how busy the industry was and when internal resources were lacking.

Approaches to Gender Diversity

Three companies had diversity policies and reported to the WGEA on an annual basis. One company was developing a gender diversity and inclusion strategy through an external consultancy firm. Another company noted that it had an equal opportunity policy. Some companies were in the process of formalising strategies and working towards greater diversity.

> *We are active in trying to recruit women into our workforce.*
>
> *At executive level, we have a strong desire to increase the female to male ratio in our organisation, albeit that has no policy around it.*

All those interviewed showed a willingness to employ women, but several companies were more passive in redressing the historical gender imbalance in the industry.

> *I think you understand that our industry's a little bit different. We employ based on people. We don't employ based on gender.*

Most companies commented on the shortage of female applicants rather than their lack of skills or any deliberate exclusion of female applicants. All companies volunteered that they ensured professional women were interviewed in the first instance if they applied – "even if their CV

doesn't come off quite as well … we probably make sure we interview everyone". Five companies seemed particularly active in female recruitment at the graduate level. One company had set a target of 50 per cent women through their graduate program assessment process and tried to achieve this. Another has recently targeted recruiting at least one female for every three cadets (undergraduate) appointments, "but there were no female applicants". More than half the companies had success and attracted young women in recent graduate recruitment.

Most companies demonstrated a commitment to gender equity and noted some other strategies they adopted. Only one company, which had a lower percentage of women itself, was involved in a program to encourage subcontractors to appoint women. The larger companies were all required to report to WGEA, and one was currently undertaking a gender equality audit as part of this.

Only one company, which was not large, was particularly proactive in its approach through its use of gender-neutral recruitment practices. They used several services to:

- Ensure their position descriptions are gender-neutral
- Remove identifying features (such as names and country of birth) from CVs
- Undertake general and other competency tests

Overall, each person interviewed for the evaluation demonstrated a willingness and interest in attracting and recruiting women. Some were more passive in their approaches, attributing an insufficiency in change to a lack of women alone at the same time as citing potential male discrimination and arguing for greater diversity beyond gender. However, some more clearly recognised the impact of gender discrimination on the industry and openly discussed the benefits gained through having a more diverse workplace. As one company noted:

> *We think that there's value in that [diversity] through alternate mindsets and experience which come out in different problem-solving techniques and points of view which can only make us stronger because we hold managerial type positions where we come to work every day to problem solve.*

However, the diversity proposition at the site worker level was less apparent to several companies. This related firstly to the fact they do not employ many workers in that category, so it is less in their area of influence. However, the benefit of these women seemed less direct for their companies. As one company noted:

> *…… the vast majority of the workers are there, and with no disrespect at all to the people in those positions, but they're there for labour. I don't think diversity provides any benefits to laying a plumbing pipe in the ground. It's either done or it's not done.*

However, others did perceive a benefit from improved gender equity for on-site roles and its potential to affect project and industry culture. As one company articulated:

> *When there are more women involved in laying concrete, what happens is that there is less toxic behaviour, there is less sexist banter, less poor language, etc. etc. So we know that all that subtle, toxic kind of masculine behaviour that happens on a work site, because it's predominantly men, that shifts. There are more women pouring concrete, the outcome is still the same, but the culture is different, and then you have a ripple effect across the industry.*

As previously mentioned, several companies noted that diversity was not limited to women. This appeared to be used to deflect from gender or reflect companies more progressive thinking about diversity. It was considered that targets and encouragement should also cover cultural background, sexual orientation and disability. One company supportive of women also stated:

> *I have a people policy that specifically targets some initiatives around gender and inclusion and diversity. But it's broader than just gender, it's gender identity and sexuality, it's Indigenous and disability. We aim for general inclusiveness – not just women.*

Most companies considered that their workplaces were welcoming and respectful and referred to their high retention rates. Some noted that there is gender wage parity in the construction industry. Some highlighted the difficulties of getting women promoted into senior site office roles.

> *Yes, you might have female sparkies, and carpenters but are they ever going to be there long enough to promote to a supervisor? You know, and why is there no site managers that are females out there? Because how could you be a female as a site manager, it's so hard.*

In addition, work flexibility concerns were identified as it was felt these could impact more women than men. Some companies provided flexibility to those with carer duties or ill health or approaching retirement. Flexibility was considered more challenging for site office-based roles, and its value to the industry and men was expressed more often by companies who demonstrated greater insight into the issues overall.

> *The reasons for not going into site management is it is hard work, long hours, and it's hard work. So that's the biggest, biggest determinant, not just for women but for men as well. …. So, we've got to fix the industry work life balance thing, which means that being a site manager is more sustainable for a longer period of time … Would it potentially attract more women? maybe? … But if you move more men to the site management roles, more women can potentially take up some of the other roles that become available.*

Overall, the industry appeared somewhat divided in its concerns and approaches to gender diversity. Some companies certainly had more traditional views, expressing some paternalist opinions on women's employment within the industry. Others were refreshingly proactive and

seeking change, which differed somewhat from the views reported in the consultant's *Recruitment Practices in the Victorian Construction Industry Report*.

Industry impressions of the VBCRS

The VBCRS framework consists of six standards identified at one of three interrelated levels. Companies were asked for their initial impressions of the draft standards and these levels which consisted of:

- Looking Out Factors – these focus on strategic management activities and organisational future proofing. (Includes Standard One and Standard Two).
- Looking In Factors – these focus on organisational culture, systems infrastructure and gender mainstreaming activities. (Includes Standard Three and Standard Four)
- Looking After Factors – these focus on effective attraction, recruitment, and retention of female workers within the organisation. (Includes Standard Four, Standard Five and Standard Six).

Nearly every company asked whom the audience of the standards was supposed to be, did they apply to all recruitment decisions – male and female, site workers (trade and labourers) and professionals, and whether they were intended to be used for businesses of all sizes and in all sectors. One company stated:

> *Are we looking to increase the level of females in the industry? Or is it just to make it a level playing field? What's the actual purpose? That wasn't really clear to me.*

It was, therefore, apparent that there was some initial confusion as to their purpose, audience and intended application. They had a particular interest in how mandatory the standards would be.

The standards themselves state:

> *The following Victorian Building and Construction Recruitment Standards (VBCRS) have been developed as a 'whole of industry' intervention to increase the participation of women workers across all sectors, levels and roles within the building and construction industry. [page 2]*

It is not explicit that the standards apply to both male and female recruitment decisions, and the consequences of non-adoption are not identified, so it was easy to see how some confusion arose as to their application. As the Women in Construction strategy focused on site-based trade roles, concern was raised about the availability of these women. It was noted by many companies that the existing pool of available female site workers was very small, with several companies stating, "we don't control supply".

Companies were then referred to a graphic within their copy of the draft standards (refer Figure 13) which linked the three interrelated areas of 'Looking Out', 'Looking In' and 'Looking After'. This diagram, and other figures presented, were used as a starting point to provide a broad overview of the standards before delving into their details. Most companies liked these three key

concepts. However, one company felt that 'Looking After' shouldn't be required because "If you get 'Looking In' right then 'Looking After' is just part of your business plan". Another noted that you couldn't isolate one from the other, and it was too simplistic to separate them in that way. Views were quite divergent. A construction manager in one company said of Figure 13 "It just looks too confusing. It's not something that's giving you a clear, broad picture of what you're trying to say". A HR person in another company said, "I mean yeah, it's very simple and without a doubt …… you have to be thinking about all three components for how you're going to attract and then recruit and retain women in our industry", which was perhaps closer to the intention of the diagram.

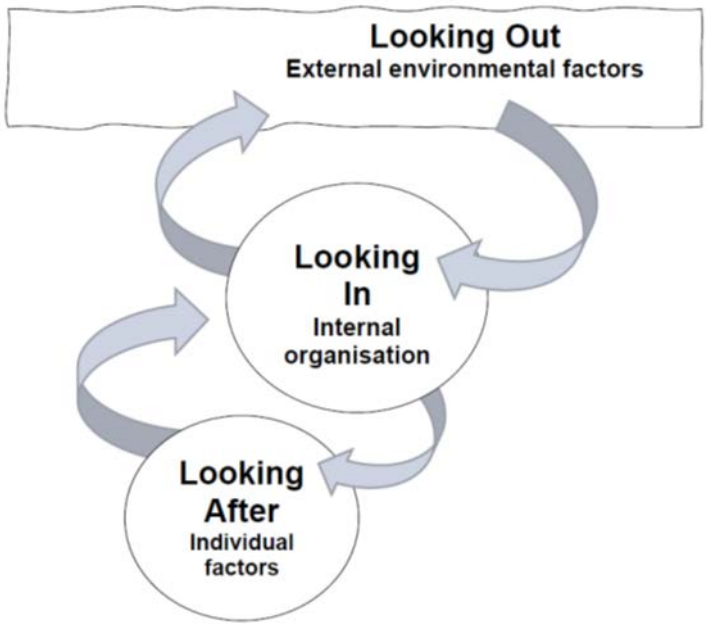


Figure 13: Looking out, in and after. (VBCRS, Page 2)

It was also stated that 'Looking Out' was perhaps the easiest to discuss but the hardest to implement, making it difficult to commence. Two companies stated that the 'Looking Out' box in Figure 13 implied it was the most important of all the areas due to its size, with several companies indicating the 'Looking after' was more critical to them and should be drawn larger. A company stated, "well it is the most important... if you don't look after your people, you've got nothing". The arrows on the diagram were also commented upon. It was asked why the 'Looking Out' factors did not connect to the 'Looking After'.

Participants were also referred to *Figure One: Implementing a gender diverse and inclusive recruitment* in their copy of the draft standards also raised further questions regarding the interrelationship between the levels. One company stated, after looking at all the graphics, that it believed the diagrams were unnecessary, while some others could not see how the graphics were linked to each other, "Do we need all of those explanations and graphics?"

These discussions were surprising, as graphics were presumably being included to assist explanation. There also appeared to be a disconnect in the participants' minds between Figure 13

and other graphics. While the graphics initially appear to be simple, they did not assist companies as well as would be expected, and as one company commented of Figure 13, "well it didn't give a clear picture of what is to follow". This comment appeared to be related to the relatively simplistic image and their views on the standards.

Standard evaluations by industry

The companies were then asked their opinions on each of the draft standards one by one. Initially, they were asked to look at the summary (reproduced in Table 13) and then look at the components for each standard provided in both the standards document and the guidelines.

Table 13: Summary of the Recruitment Standards

Looking Out (Analysis)	Standard One	The organisation underpins strategic business planning and people capability decisions with ongoing industry and external analysis.
	Standard Two	The organisation holds itself accountable for employing and developing a gender diverse workforce.
Looking In (Formulation)	Standard Three	The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy.
Looking After (Execution and Alignment)	Standard Four	The organisation has a strong employer brand and appropriate employee value propositions (EVP) for all workers in the business (permanent and contractual).
	Standard Five	The organisation has implemented a formal hiring and retention strategy based on modern recruitment methods.
	Standard Six	The organisation has implemented effective metrics, evaluation criteria and reporting mechanisms across all recruitment activities.

Based on this, companies were asked to discuss how effective they felt the draft standard would be in changing gender diversity in the industry. To help focus attention, the interviewer used a 5-point Likert type scale, with 1 being 'not effective at all' and 5 being 'extremely effective'. Once a rating had been indicated, companies were asked their reasoning behind selecting a particular value.

Companies were then referred to the guidelines and asked to look at the components, activities and tools. They were asked about their ease of implementation. Again, to help focus attention, a 6-point Likert scale was used. This provided no midpoint, with 1 being 'very difficult' and 6 being 'very easy'. Again, the reasoning behind a particular score was asked. Not every company allocated an exact response, so a score range was gauged based on their comments in some instances. Therefore, the conversations around each standard were particularly valued in the evaluation, but not every interview yielded an exact score for effectiveness and ease of implementation.

Standard One (Looking Out)

The organisation underpins strategic business planning and people capability decisions with ongoing industry and external analyses.

The views on how effective the first standard would be were not conclusive, with responses varying from 'extremely effective' right down to 'not effective at all'. It appeared that those with HR departments or HR backgrounds were more optimistic about its potential effectiveness. Three companies, including a larger company, felt this standard could be highly effective, whilst the smallest company felt it would not be effective. The rest of the companies reported it would be somewhat effective. Concerning ease of implementation, again, there was some inconsistency in responses. Only one company with 50 to 100 employees felt it would be very easy "…. there's not really anything in there … it's just data". However, the rest reported it would be 'somewhat difficult', 'difficult', or 'very difficult'.

While everyone agreed that analysing industry data was essential for developing business plans, the link between information and increasing the number of female employees, particularly at the trade level, was not apparent to several companies. However, one company said that could see value in this standard stated:

> *It certainly – it starts the conversation. That's half the battle. So, in terms of standard one, it is effective.*

The availability of the data was raised by several companies. This was considered to be problematic for many unless companies were assisted in the process.

> *…… probably a few more suggestions on how they can actually capture that data to then test drive down the track it's actually working.*
>
> *How frequently is that analysis available to all organisations? How accurate is it?*

However, companies who were less convinced of its effectiveness stated the following and the need for some accountability.

> *….. setting business plans I think are done in isolation around what they're capable of as opposed to always checking in on external analysis.*
>
> *I think there's got to be something a bit more robust around that. Rather holding ourselves accountable to external analysis …. I just think yeah, putting a business plan and having that underpinned by something, big deal, could be something stronger.*

Also, the link to other standards were made.

> *Like the data collecting should be done first. So, that then you've got a benchmark to work on by way of – by the time you get to standard six, you're like, 'Has this strategy even worked?'*

There were also questions raised about the ability to undertake some of the tasks and an interest in conducting such analyses.

> *Well, the last two – business intelligence data analytics, how many people are seriously going to be doing that?*
>
> *It's not a point of being difficult of really being nonsensical, because integrated data management actions aligning strategic goals with operational processes. Really? What are we trying to achieve here? I don't think – no.*

Also, questions were raised about what data should or could be analysed, the time and expertise required to source relevant data and the frequency of gathering data. "The data changes so frequently how could we do that?" There was also concern amongst smaller organisations that they would not have access to data.

To formulate benchmarks for some aspects such as skills requirements and work patterns was considered quite difficult. As one company stated:

> *…. you know these change so drastically and quickly, to have really kind of clear benchmarks on these. I think these change and evolve, so I just think it's somewhat difficult.*

Regardless of their size, they agreed that the smaller the company, the less likely they would have the "administrative grunt" to conduct such an analysis. "We always plan but how many people are seriously going to do all this?" It was thought that many small businesses might not understand the language or concepts contained within these tools and activities, and the consensus was "the majority would struggle". This demonstrates how important the next stage of the MBV work will be during the testing the Standards within industry as well as the resources needed for implementation. The one company that had been more positive about the standard also raised the issue of company size.

> *It's a pretty big project to start getting all this data and stuff. It's then, what are the company focussing on? So, at 50 people, you're really, you're running all engines blaring at all times. It's really hard to actually stop and pivot and hire on something like this. Unless you're hiring a resource to help you with it. So, it depends on company size. I think anyone 80 employees and over can, because they should have a people and culture head. But anyone under, I'd almost question they're going to struggle to implement this side of things.*

One company mentioned the wide range of subcontractors in the industry and the difficulty for the small companies.

> *So, for our trades - and keeping in mind that there's trade companies out there that are bigger than the business I work for but there's lots of them out there that are single, sole operators or a team of a handful of people, the way that this is written, for them to set big business strategy around diversifying and assessing what's going*

on in the industry and what's going on in the world, I wouldn't think it would harbour them much [of a] tangible result.

Some of these concerns will be addressed in the industry testing being conducted by the MBV.

Standard Two (Looking Out)

The organisation holds itself accountable for growing the supply of female workers in the building and construction industry.

Again, the responses to how effective this standard would be were also varied. While considering Standard One to be very ineffective, the smallest company felt this would be a very effective standard. The larger companies were split in their views, with two regarding it as very or highly effective and the others considered it as slightly effective. No company thought it would be 'very easy', 'easy' or 'very difficult' to implement. Three companies felt it would be 'somewhat easy' to implement, while the remaining companies felt it would be 'difficult' or 'somewhat difficult'. More than one company noted that it is primarily a supply issue and "we don't control supply". This referred in this instance to women in managerial, professional, and on-site roles.

Two of these companies reversed their opinions on the effectiveness of Standard Two compared to Standard One. The arguments were made along these lines, with the second response more in line with remarks made by other companies.

Standard two, I think probably isn't as dynamic as Standard One .. you're talking about underpinning strategic business planning, capability decisions, external analysis. All those words, they're good words, whereas you've got Standard Two, and you're just saying the organisation holds itself accountable. Now, when you start telling people you need to be accountable, you're going off on a different tangent, I believe.

I think it's somewhat effective [Standard One]. I think there's got to be something a bit more robust around that. Rather holding ourselves accountable to external analysis or I don't know, but I just think yeah, putting a business plan and having that underpinned by something, big deal, could be something stronger like Standard Two.

The remaining companies regarded it as effective, but views varied on its level of effectiveness. One company who thought it would be highly effective expressed their response in this way.

I think when you're putting a very tangible target and accountability on to somebody, they're going to be brought into it. That's probably what the construction industry needs at the moment.

The standard was regarded as more straightforward and directly related to increasing the supply of women in the industry. It was seen as "part of a progressive shift in the industry" to create a culture of inclusiveness and a "tangible target". Positive comments were made about the grants and scholarships; however, one company considered this and other female-only programs

discriminatory to male entrants. Several of the companies that appeared more progressive in the gender area questioned that the standard related purely to gender and considered being held accountable to the employment of other underrepresented groups should be encouraged.

> *I think it - from a managerial organisation, yeah, it definitely would but I think it's broader than gender.*

Four companies raised the value of gender diversity and the benefits of targets. They discussed women's suitability for particular roles and the impact of maternity leave on smaller companies.

> *We don't hire based on gender; we hire based on capability. And if it got to the stage that you did have to hire based upon gender, we would have a serious problem.*
>
> *How do you - if you're in a managerial-based site role working on a project take maternity leave? …. being quite selfish to the project, it's very hard to manage … where you've only got a team of one or two people,*
>
> *……. there would be a conversation around physical output because some trades are physically strenuous, and it generally comes down to how fit and strong you are to be able to do a repetitive task over and over and over again quickly.*

These comments made it evident why implementing the standard could prove difficult, but also its value. As two companies observed:

> *Oh, I think it is difficult because to change an image of an industry that is just so entrenched as being so male dominated …… it's one thing to improve the image of it, but if they [women] then come into the business and what they experience is not as that …. you have to promise what you're going to deliver.*
>
> *If this was in our DNA then it would be 2nd nature – you need to make a concerted shift towards going out of your way to attract female workers.*

While several other companies did refer to women's lack of physical strength, there was also reference made to the fact that companies need to be "smarter about what we get people to do" and the need to make roles better overall, so they were attractive to both genders. After mentioning supply issues, one of the more progressive companies also questioned, "But how else do you make what we do enticing to women?"

Accountability of head contractors and trade roles, which were seen to be very much the domain of subcontractors, was questioned. Concern was raised as to the head contractors' role within their indirect labour force.

> *Why would you hold yourself accountable for something that's not necessarily going to yield a better than neutral or expected result? It's a lot of time and effort with potentially - and this is a big underline - potentially no special reward and that's again, from a trade-based.*

One company mentioned that 'looking out' is led by others with the government and industry working against each other, and a 'disconnect' between gender targets, government requirement and a whole industry approach. It was also noted that this should come from "a higher place than individual organisations. It is ineffective if one or two organisations come on board – it needs to be run by the government." Organisations being accountable for something that they see as primarily outside of their control is problematic.

Concerns related to implementation were mostly based on outcomes and accountability, which can be addressed in the future MBV testing and implementation work.

> *It would be hard to do it well, for it to mean something that would benefit future employees and their business*
>
> *I have a hesitation with accountability - accountability sets up a pass/fail*

Recruitment decisions for many were grounded within business requirements and a concern that this standard could be at the "detriment of the business" if it meant "employing women for numbers". One company who felt it would be challenging to implement and elaborated,

> *If we assigned a budget to support industry-led activities – where would I put it? and would that provide any improvement to the industry or us? I think no and I wouldn't know where to put it.*

Others commented on how they were to measure many of the activities suggested, the practicality in doing some, the implications of not doing things, and the sheer number of activities listed. Again, the testing of the standards by the MBV should address these issues and how to balance the aspirational approach taken with the practicalities of implementation.

> *There's a lot of these – so, for example, 'Organisational leaders publicly champion a gender diverse and inclusive culture and challenge the company to move towards the highest levels of the gender diversity and inclusion continuum'. Do you actually measure that? Can you measure it? There's just a lot of broad statements. I can tick that .. but there's probably nothing to actually say, that someone's doing it. It's all very subjective and it depends on who's going to be ticking the boxes.*
>
> *So, actually contributing to industry conferences. Who's actually going to attend all those things ……. It's almost a full-time position at a construction company.*

Resources required were again raised, with small and medium companies having fewer resources and larger companies more and therefore facing an easier phase in implementing some of the requirements. "So, unless you have the resources anyone under 80 will struggle with this entire process". It is noted that the necessity of company resources was identified by the MBV and this work has now been funded. The aspirational approach taken by the MBV to this work was recognised with companies considering this difficult to do well and "have it mean something that would benefit both future employees and their business. This is quite high-level type of stuff". Testing of the standards within industry and addressing implementation issues by the MBV is

therefore important. However, one smaller residential company felt this standard might be easier to meet in their sector, which is “less hardwired”, and provided more “interaction with the design space that includes more females”.

Overall, a general willingness was expressed regarding the basis of this standard, but the lack of HR knowledge was apparent amongst those making recruitment decisions from a construction background, either unwilling or less able to implement the standards.

> *But yeah, I just think we’re probably barking up the wrong tree a little bit …… we’re talking about analytics and that kind, we’ve got to be fair dinkum. How many people, other than maybe some HR guru in bloody – in [Tier 1 Company] is going to be hiring people this way.*

It was apparent that change would be difficult, but some believed that it was possible. The continuing work by the MBV testing the standards will presumably address the needs of companies without HR support, as they represent the majority of the industry.

Standard Three (Looking In)

The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy.

This standard's effectiveness was considered higher than the previous two, which related to the fact this was more within the control of organisations themselves. One company felt this would be an ‘extremely effective’ standard, while four felt it would be ‘very effective’, and the remaining companies felt it would be ‘slightly effective’. The consensus was that it was more straightforward, easier to understand and more directly related to their business processes and activities. In terms of implementation, four companies, including three of the larger companies, felt it would be ‘somewhat easy’ or ‘easy’ to implement, while the remaining companies considered it would be ‘some difficult’.

Some expressed a concern that there could be a disconnect between the developed strategy and the lived experience of women, suggesting the standard may not be as effective as it could be.

> *I think everybody can develop a strategy, but I think it's another thing to actually be doing it ……. again it's something more robust around that for it to be very effective.*

While the smallest company felt it would not be practical given the number of people they employ, testing of the standards and guidance materials within small companies will be important. They also mentioned the lack of women, which other companies also noted. Nevertheless, many felt the standard could be highly effective once that issue was addressed, and one company noted that at present:

> *……. there’s a sense of the pool is a certain size and we’re all fighting over the same pool and that doesn’t help anyone, including organisations or individuals.*

This company also observed that women do not progress without available women and the importance of senior female role models. Any strategy needs to address this. The comment also

reflected the attitude many companies had toward employment and the commitment required for progression.

> *…….. so, we pride ourselves with long-term employment and people progress because they will work and live and breathe in the organisation and make a difference within the organisation. If we get more diversity towards the top, that will aid that.*

The positive comments made were related to the usefulness of having a guideline or roadmap and the importance of aligning with community standards on gender. It was also noted that templates used for administration should be rewritten to be more inclusive. Again, the issue that inclusion was more than gender was raised.

> *……. but I think it's broader than gender and construction. It's got to be around inclusion in general and welcoming diversity in the workplace*
>
> *I think there's great benefit for all people to expand their horizons through diversity and inclusion, but I think for the construction industry, it's really important because it is such a male-dominated industry.*
>
> *It repeatedly mentions female – there is no non-binary*

Those who thought the draft standard was effective also expressed concern about its implementation amongst some of their competitors.

> *I'm just trying to think of all the construction leaders that I can think of in our space …… I can't imagine any of them bringing in a gender equality piece into their annual goals. Because it's all very much quality focus, safety focus, program focus.*

The future MBV work expressly addresses implementation issues amongst companies. Several companies were concerned about the different efforts required to implement some of the actions and the ability of policies to effect real change.

> *So, this is a bit tricky, because some things are really easy to do ……. it is very easy for an organisational leader to publicly come out and say that they're committed to it right? That's very easy. For that to actually happen and for an organisational culture to be founded on equality and inclusivity, and mutual respect, that is extremely difficult.*
>
> *It's not just an organisational leader saying, "We're doing this". It's every single person shifting their mindset to ensure that that's how they're behaving and the culture that they're creating.*

It was pointed out by many that many of the activities were within their control to do. However, the sheer volume was daunting, with several organisations asking about the resources needed to undertake the work. The importance of the future MBV work therefore cannot be understated nor the value good resources will be to the industry. Many noted that the standard could be simplified. As well as the cultural change needed to underpin many of the activities, the tools that

relied on external advice or assessment were also seen as more challenging to implement than internally led ones. There was also concern about those which related to clients, with companies noting their lack of control over an alignment with a new gender diversity policy. Some mentioned they could not afford to turn down work from clients who do not comply nor refuse tenders from subcontractors, especially when margins were tight.

> *What are we doing here? He who hires the most females gets more work? I don't think so!*

Again, the MBV future work of testing the standards will investigate implementation and any potential implications for employers, clients and women themselves should be uncovered. Overall, at present they were concerned about how it would be put into action and how much discretion there might be. Some wanted more control over this "We would want to set our own targets", while others expressed a need for stronger regulation or observance.

> *…. if you make this a whole part mandatory, I would question the number of construction companies that would actually go through this process.*
>
> *It is a fine line between advocating, you don't want it forced on you. Does this subconsciously give us an obligation to choose someone because they are female?*
>
> *……. you make it more of a certification, that might be something to actually force companies to speak about it and do it. If you don't …. people will go, "Well, if I don't have to do it, why do I do it?*

Finally, some apprehension was expressed concerning what can be missed within formal policies, citing their own informality within policies and the subsequent positive organisational culture. It is planned to address these implementation issues in the next stage of this work.

> *….. there's not a lot of formal processes. It's just a team feeling …. so, there's those sort of things that get missed ……. Yeah, we don't put it in our employee benefits. It doesn't say, "can take your child to the doctor when you need to".*

Standard Four (Looking After)

The organisation has a strong employer brand and appropriate employee value propositions (EVP) for all workers in the business (permanent and contractual).

The smaller companies did not believe this standard was as effective as the medium and larger companies, whose responses ranging from 'somewhat effective' to 'extremely effective'. Again, this more positive response appeared to reflect that the standard was more within the company's control. The smallest company noted that they did not currently have a "brand" and it was not feasible to do so. However, they agreed in principle that "it is good to make gender equity a part of your brand", but another smaller company was "sceptical – it is just a bit of marketing". The smallest company felt this would be very difficult for them to implement. The remaining companies' responses varied between 'difficult', 'somewhat difficult' and 'somewhat easy'. No

company felt it would be easy or very easy. Additional future resources will therefore be welcomed.

As part of this discussion, most companies mentioned their good retention figures and felt they had a strong, though not necessarily formal, employee value proposition. Some companies stated that they already did much of this.

> *When I read some of these things about gender flexibility and all that type of thing, we already do all that type of thing. "The organisation provides on-site amenities that are clean and conducive to females." On our sites for 20 years, we've always had a female toilet, for cleaners and landscapers.*
>
> *Strategies are in place to ensure that flexibility of work doesn't hamper career progression.*

One company regarded the strategy as very effective but wondered about making the focus more specific to women as the standard was talking more about all workers. At the same time, another questioned some of its focus.

> *I still fail to see why we would have technical training that's directed only at the women. If you're in our industry, you're doing the same work and your pay rate, in our industry is pretty much the same ……. This is sort of saying that women in our industry currently aren't trained appropriately, they're treated as second-class citizen, and they're paid differently. Well, I don't agree with that.*

Another considered the standard a "bit of a monster" and that while they could try and implement raised concerns, such as "What happens when you're pregnant on site? How does that work ……. what's the OH&S requirements …. and do they change?". Another company also raised the issue of career progression and motherhood as the intensity of the building industry and its hours "does make it extremely difficult for a mother …. to balance progression". They stated that they did not have a solution and cited the loss of site-based female managers to project management firms better able to provide flexibility and manage intensity.

One of the medium-sized companies queried what these propositions would look like, while another was "more on the fence with this one – it is not easily measured and very generic". The larger companies, those who would be expected to be more brand centred, felt this standard strongly emphasised who they were.

> *If you create the right culture, you will build a brand and people will then want to work for you.*
>
> *It shows you are doing something – it lends itself to people believing in something.*
>
> *I almost think the brand should be a higher [standard] – get this through this door first.*

> *I'd throw a dart at the board and say more than 50% of the building businesses wouldn't do that stuff to begin with, apart from your big – [name of several large companies], they've probably already done all this stuff. We're in tier 3 space, so we're not in tier 1, tier 2, so we're just starting to get into this stuff, and like I said, there's a lot in this that we would find challenging ourselves.*

Several companies raised the issue of resources, and the impact on smaller companies or those in trades was of concern.

> *Going to smaller commercial builders or into the trade world, this is a big, big undertaking, what they're setting out here.*
>
> *If you put this in front of someone as something that they have to do, they're just going to go, 'Oh God. No. I'm bloody busy.'*

Comments on the length, number of activities, the need for examples and the resources and time required. As noted, the need for these resources was foreshadowed by the MBV and is part of their future work already funded.

> *And again, similar feedback by way of actually showing examples and cut down the text to half. That would be very helpful.*

Those who felt it was more challenging to implement believed it to be complex and costly, with the following reflecting comments also made by others.

> *……. some things are easy, some things are extremely difficult, but I would say it's somewhat difficult overall.*

Responses ranged with some stating that "Most (tools and activities) can be achieved" and others considering "There is a bit in this" and "this would be a big undertaking, 50% of a senior employee workload for months." The cost and time implications of this work will be reduced somewhat by the future MBV work, as new resources will be freely available to all companies. One company addressed the need for incentives. "But making this a certification will make this achievable". Achieving buy-in for everyone was also considered to be addressed this way "Because everyone wants to win an award".

Standard Five (Looking After)

The organisation has implemented a formal hiring and retention strategy based on modern recruitment methods

Opinions on the effectiveness of this standard varied and were not related to the size of the organisations. Four companies felt this was 'very effective', while the remaining, but one, felt they were 'somewhat effective' or 'slightly effective'. One company was less disposed to this Standard "Except for the first two, the next four are just a joke" and felt that HR personnel were unnecessary. This reflected their own approach, which did not include any HR department. They considered this both successful and personal but did not express any insight in potential gender

bias that may affect decision making. They gave this example of an employee who because they knew "women don't particularly liking project management" they slotted them somewhere else which they love.

While one company regarded it as highly effective, it should never be considered the only way to deal with recruitment and does not suit the industry as well as others they knew.

> *I don't think it's ever a five because if you have too formal and it's too restrictive, then you can't think outside the square …. if we come across a good CV, we will find a position.*

One company noted that Standards Three and Five were linked and questioned the need for both "you could just have one as the other underpinned it". The smallest company felt that a formal recruitment process would be too time-consuming, and recruitment was done infrequently. Another felt, "I just think that it moves away from the right person for the right job and it's almost not solving the root problem - it's a little bit maybe surface level." But then later reflected on "making sure that there's a robust recruitment process that gives every applicant a fair chance of winning the spot" which goes the heart of this standard. The link between formal and fair was less evident for some. While fairness is not explicitly referenced in the components, it is perhaps this type of language which is more accessible and acceptable to this audience.

Most valued the role of a solid system. Concern was raised about the introduction or expansion of an HR role and whether all of the tools or activities were beneficial. One company, who had their HR manager present and part of the interview expressed it this way.

> *Rather than having a team of HR and five people running that, we think that connection and interviewing and understanding the building process is what is important, and that is what we're looking for.*

Balancing current industry practices and the aspirational intent of the draft standards is something that will need to be more fully addressed, and a reason why testing the standards is important. Less than half the companies were currently undertaking what would be considered in the draft standards as modern recruitment strategies. Several had run unconscious bias training for some managers in the business. Impressively one company with less than 100 employees was using gender-neutral language in advertisements and de-identifying CVs, which were not explicit actions in this standard.

It was also believed by some that "many will fall short as it is difficult to maintain". While one company thought it would be somewhat difficult to implement due to the sheer number of components and activities, they then commented:

> *I think just putting together a process and a method is easy. You know making sure you've got people trained on a process, that's again easy. It takes a lot of time and effort, but it's a simple easy concept and thing to do.*

Most companies again discussed their willingness to interview women and their excellent retention rates. One participant outlined how the informal recruitment practice can work in favour of women, as it does for men.

> *On each of our projects there is at least one female stop-go person. How did they start? Someone on site said…. I've got a daughter, wife, neighbour who is looking for work …… and so we gave them a go!*

It was generally felt once you get past the number of tools and activities that many were "do-able" or "majority can be achieved but a handful are hard", and they were less controversial with over half the companies. Refining these in the work should significantly improve implementation.

Standard Six (Looking After)

The organisation has implemented effective metrics, evaluation criteria and reporting mechanisms across all recruitment activities.

Over half the companies felt this would be very effective or effective as a standard, with two considering it somewhat effective and one not effective at all. While more companies were more optimistic about this standard's effectiveness, no company said it would be very easy to implement. Three companies said it would be easy to implement, with the remaining saying it would be somewhat difficult to somewhat easy. No one thought it would be very difficult.

One company, with a HR team, did wonder whether it was actually worthy of being a separate standard. It was felt that these metrics that a recruitment team would typically record and should become part of Standard 5.

> *I'm not sure it needs to be a standard. It could just be a bit of a toolkit for people to, 'Hey, these are some of the KPIs you could include for your hiring team. '*

Two companies who considered the standard would be very effective based on the accountability aspect of the standard, with one stating:

> *…….. if you're going to target X percentage of women or one female in every shortlist, it's tangible, it's reportable, and it holds people accountable, I think.*

It was noted that gathering metrics was always "not easy to do" and that maintaining a consistent approach across the business could be difficult. However, the fact the standard was "just metrics" and metrics were used in other parts of the business appeared to influence effectiveness and ease of implementation. It was considered part of normal business practice and could be adapted for recruitment. As one company said:

> *So, we - as a business, we prioritise metrics and evaluating and always checking in with tangible mechanisms across everything that we do because we always want to make sure that we achieve what we set out to achieve and we learn lessons and we constantly improve.*

Some were more enthusiastic about this standard, especially when it was in their HR remit.

> *Well, I'm a data nerd. I love it. So long as it all just comes down to maintaining a consistent approach towards business, I would say it's easy, and we can continue to improve it …… there's quite a few things that we sort of already assess and analyse already.*

However, from a management perspective, there was more pushback. Some felt an over-attention on them could "potentially removing the innovative side of a business". Some were sceptical about the value and focus on metrics and while on the surface may seem easy, were considered an additional burden on resources that may not have the desired effect.

> *…… If it's absentee rates, we know .. it's pretty low, and so we don't sort of analyse it …. and things like training sessions per occupation role, that's – we don't restrict what we do. If there's a need, then we typically do it.*
>
> *There's not a lot of red tape within the organisation. And we don't need to record it because we get on with it.*

For two companies, the list of activities and tools were considered unmanageable. One commented, "You'd only adopt a handful; attempting all would be difficult". The other stated,

> *We're really being unrealistic. How many organisations do you think would actually [do this] – once again, this is just a HR department ensuring perpetuity with their existence, that's all that is.*

The smallest company noted that "each recruitment is different, metrics really don't matter". It is planned that the issues relating to implementation will be addressed in future iterations of the MBV work and resources developed for industry.

Other themes

Issues that impacted company responses

Both interviewers observed that several companies were somewhat defensive in their responses and reactions to the draft standards, which may have detracted from the gaining a deeper insight into their genuine opinions. They were also unaware of the resources that will be developed for companies in the next stage of this work by the MBV which will assist implementation. It was apparent that those who were the most supportive and displayed more insight into the complexity of gender in construction were less defensive in their responses. They also typically had prior experience working in other industries and provided valuable insights for the evaluation.

The participants with more defensive attitudes could not get completely out of the mindset of being seemingly judged on their company's current gender performance. Therefore, some time was spent justifying their company actions rather than focussing more fully on particular aspects of the standards. There was also more dismissal of features suggested in the standards when they had less intention of doing them, or their intention reflected poorly on their current

performance. However, the overall reactions and responses to many aspects of the draft standards were quite apparent.

Recruitment practices are not seen as unfair

The standards aim is to address the issue of informal recruitment and its impact on women's employment. These informal practices are considered to advantage men; however, many companies consider their current recruitment as fair, adequate for their purpose and appropriate for their industry. The link between informality and lack of gender equality is not evident to most, so the supporting materials for the recruitment standards need to be more explicit in this space. In addition, some companies did not know how the standards would work within labour-hire companies, which has a predominantly casualised workforce and with head contracting companies. The new resources being developed by the MBV as a follow on to this work should allay these concerns.

Impact on subcontractors

Following this was the issue of subcontractors, who were not interviewed but whose practices were queried. The main problem seen was the supply of site-based women, which was considered more difficult to overcome, and the value attributed by some to increased diversity in this sector. The ability of head contractors to shift gender requirements onto subcontractors and labour-hire companies was also noted and the fairness of this on these parties questioned.

> *We always put conditions on our subbies. So, in federally funded projects .. we go 'right, we are code compliant, you need to be code compliant. If you want to work for us, you need to be compliant', and the same thing will go for this …… We would just dictate to them. We were to say, 'this is what it is, and this is what we want'.*

It was also remarked that few checks on these requirements are conducted, and several companies raised concern that the "…. whole thing could just look good on the surface but with no real change happening". In addition, some questioned if the requirement was for builders themselves to get more women into the trades. If so, then adhering to the Standards was considered to involve a "great deal of effort for potentially no return" as they do not typically employ in this area, nor do they control what others do. This lack of control directly contradicts prior comments relating to imposing conditions on subcontractors.

The importance of leadership

While these standards are directly related to changing industry culture, this link was either less apparent or perhaps seen as less achievable. Construction-based respondents generally did not recognise these cultural problems and tended to defend their industry, contrary to the HR personnel who more often recognised and understood it. Two HR managers raised several concerns, reflecting on their own desensitisation and their concern for what women could be "getting into".

> *….. we [HR] do our absolute best to make sure that we're bringing women in all the time ……. but even to this day, right now in 2021, we are still experiencing things that people say on a site, that are derogatory or not inclusive or whatever.*
>
> *So, the worry is that because of the culture we're so desensitised to what's appropriate and what's not appropriate, what's inclusive, what's not. I feel like that is the biggest piece of how to shift, because you can bring them in, but you've got to be able to keep them here …. the biggest risk is holding on to them …… you have young women come into our business, who just don't want to put up with that shit. They come in and go 'Oh my god, listen to how they speak or speak to me or what they say in front of me or their lack of respect for me'. So, they'll opt out.*

This desensitisation, even by senior women and younger men, again demonstrates the need for strong leadership in this space. Good Standards are needed so that business leaders support can be more readily secured, and they can become more genuinely engaged in this change. As one HR manager reflected:

> *…… we have a mostly predominantly white male representation across construction entirely, and so there is just this lack of diversity. So …. I guess first and foremost, we need to be able to flip the business leadership. I think these things are culturally so hard …you need support and buy in.*

However, in their current form, there may be issues eliciting that support. As one very supportive construction leader of a large company, stated:

> *……. it's quite verbose and the words for a silly builder like me are a little bit hard to relate, and it does take 21 pages. It's quite extensive, and therefore is a – you really need to think about it, and that's a lot of work, and I'm not sure whether the energy cannot be better spent on some of it.*

Language and terminology used in the Standards

All companies commented on how wordy the documents were overall, with most repeatedly referring to their complexity and not understanding some of the language and terminology used. The use of what was considered as 'HR terminology' was a particular point of irritation. This issue has not been referred to in each review but mentioned when it was particularly pertinent. These comments were often gently made and followed up with some suggestions or reassuring voices regarding the intent of the standards. The following are some comments made by various companies to demonstrate their concern regarding various aspects such as the scope of the documents, overlaps between areas, the language used, and the activities suggested. It is understood the further work of the MBV will be addressing these issues as implementation.

> *….. but I read through this, and I was, "My gosh. So much words" probably can just condense it to that first page and remove the second page. And then maybe just be a*

little bit clearer as to what – and this maybe me being vague …. but what the purpose is of the actual recruitment standards?

I think they're probably paying an academic to do a lot of this, talk about complicated, it's just too much, but it's – I shouldn't say that.

The actions are a joke, to tell you the truth. A HR person probably wrote this.

Companies don't have HR people hiring, they have construction people …. this is all HR jargon and I don't understand that …. It's over the top, so long, and wordy ……. it's just overkill.

I think they've made things way more complicated than they need to be and this will only frighten people …. you need to be being really practical with language, you know

Simple accountable activities that increase over time

As well as the use of more straightforward language, more "do-able" activities tailored to construction that companies could be held accountable to was also raised. It was thought that adopting the standards in their current form, and the accomplishing activities, might involve "going from 0 to 100%" for many companies. Starting from a low base may affect implementation, and this and the sheer number of components and activities were of concern.

Yeah, it needs to be more realistic and just don't have words that are going to look good on a piece of paper when it's presented to people. It needs to be realistic and it's not realistic, to tell you the truth. You'd be lucky to have 50% of it to be realistic.

The accountability of actions was queried, and some could not see that there was much that was mandatory. Again, further work on implementation will no doubt clarify this aspect. Some companies pointed to the fact that the industry needs to be held accountable, and as two participants stated:

…… language is really important …. A lot of things are not yes/no and anyway what is the consequences of a no?

…… there's nothing around implementation …… it doesn't seem to matter if the rules are broken. And, frankly, if we're gonna have all these standards …… but if a small business or medium-sized business doesn't adhere to them, right, nothing happens. Again, someone's got to be held to account …. otherwise, it's not fair and equitable….. why deliver this stuff if others don't?

In addition, the idea that capacity in the area could increase over time and should be incremental and staged, step by step, was mentioned. Picking initial actions that would build capacity for future work could be a way of overcoming some hesitancy. Two company comments reflect support for that approach:

……. you need to do everything step by step. So okay, we've done this. And not just make it …… a tick box exercise.

> *Look it's really not overly complicated ……. So, give them say five things that their workplace can do tomorrow ……. So 'Go and do some gender bias training' …. So, they need to go and employ that person and they'll come in. Now what will happen is, they'll [Managers] think that's a quick, simple, easy thing to do, because you've actually spoon fed it to them, and it was really good initiative. And they'll just think, 'okay, we'll just tick off that box'. But what will happen is if you get a good person, that good person will get at least three of the 10 in the room to shift. And all you need to do is shift a couple for things to happen. Then add four more ……. And next time you can add even more.*

Companies that could see the inherent value of having industry standards often came from a higher starting point due to prior work in the area. While this could make the standards easier to implement, they also wanted to understand if their status in the field could be better recognised. This spectrum of current practice could perhaps be managed with different levels of "accreditation" or an awards type system, which could link better to a rating scale rather than the current Yes/No option. The future work of the MBV, focused on implementation, should address these concerns and clarify company-specific requirements.

7.5 Overall findings and recommendations

The MBV were engaged to develop aspirational standards that represent best practice and develop guidance notes for construction companies of different sizes. The MBV identified that testing and implementation of the standards would be required. This second stage was not part of this evaluation but is now funded and will be conducted in 2021/2022. From this evaluation of the first stage work we can report that companies were not fully supportive of the standards in their current form. This finding conflicts with the feedback the MBV received after developing the standards and presenting them to the BICC. Rating for both their effectiveness and ease of implementation were not high. However, Standards 3 and 6 were seen as more effective overall as compared to the other standards. Standards 5 and 6 were seen to be easier to implement than the other standards. It was reassuring that many companies sought greater gender equity, so the further work being undertaken by the MBV in this area will be appreciated. Revised and new resources, based on current industry practice, which help build capacity will be of value.

Improvement to gender equity in the construction industry was perceived positively by many of the companies interviewed. Only two companies inferred, through various comments, that gender, while worthy of consideration, was not an issue that they needed to focus much attention upon in their business. The rest of the companies could be classified as more supportive or very supportive and wanting change.

While no company could fully see the potential of the Standards in their current form, revisiting and revising them though user feedback will be beneficial. As several companies implied, and as one explicitly stated, "You could have a bit of backlash there". Those companies unwilling to

change will no doubt always have some criticisms of any standards. However, refining and expanding upon the documentation will assist those willing to make changes and reduce unnecessary resistance. Several avenues for further investigation have been suggested by industry so this evaluation has been of use in identifying current concerns and the development of recommendations that would be worth consideration within the next piece of work by the MBV.

It is therefore considered, from the conversations held with these companies, that a set of standards would be welcomed, particularly by larger companies, once they were simplified. More accessible language suited to managers making recruitment decisions in construction and further resources would be appreciated. In addition, revising activities so they are accountable (using the SMART principles[15]) is recommended. The WGEA materials are to be commended and have excellent resources that are use easy to use and in easily understood language. These could be modelled, and various rating schemes adapted to suit. Companies were also seeking construction-specific resources and training to support their implementation of the standards. The next stage of the MBV work should certainly assist with this, but again, the WGEA resources and materials are good references, as are the Recruit Smarter materials developed by the Victorian Government. Consideration should be given to implementing the standards in a staged approach. The WGEA have used this strategy effectively, starting years ago with more manageable tasks for larger companies and now having a more comprehensive compliance requirement for all companies with over 100 employees. This type of staged approach for construction may be essential for companies of less than 80 employees or those with fewer resources initially and would aid overall implementation in the longer term. Companies with over 100 employees noted they already had compliance requirements with the WGEA and considered that greater alignment with these standards would be helpful. In addition, the outcome of noncompliance needs to be articulated in any guidance documentation derived in the next stage of the MBV work.

The standards address two dilemmas within the industry: the perception that fair recruitment processes do not occur in companies and the lack of gender equity in the industry. These both exist, and both are problematic. However, in the minds of many construction companies, the first is less apparent, with many believing their current recruitment as fair, adequate for its purpose and appropriate for their industry. Concerning gender equity, many consider this to be relatively outside their control due to the lack of women, and gendered perceptions regarding women's lifestyles and women's capacity are also apparent. This reflects what the MBV consultant also found.

The recruitment standards are structured around the dual adoption of modern recruitment practices (that are alien or contested by the companies surveyed for this evaluation and the MBV's initial report) and gender equity. Overall, the standards reflect a more proactive HR

[15] Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART)

tailored approach that did not seem to fit the mindset of some businesses. This is not to say that modern recruitment practices have no place in construction; they undoubtedly do; however, their intent and practice needs to be presented in a manner that is more accessible to the average construction firm. We are not suggesting 'pandering' to companies who do not wish to change but rather starting their journey by recognising more their current processes. Even the larger companies, further along in addressing both recruitment and gender equity, found the standards complicated in their current form. The plan for the MBV to trial the standards and continue work in this area is therefore well founded.

Many companies have given little or no attention to both recruitment and gender equity, so the standards, while aspirational, do not reflect what many companies could achieve. This is particularly true for traditional firms, small companies or those without any HR. There was also a strong sense that no real change would occur even if efforts outlined were expended or that companies that do not comply would/could be held accountable. The value of the next stage of the MBV work cannot be underrated if implementation is to be successful. While more traditional companies will be harder to transform, many companies appear willing to embrace gender equity more thoughtfully but may resist a more formalised HR approach to recruitment inherent in the standards. This resistance relates to resourcing but is also philosophical as they do not perceive value in adopting a HR-driven approach to recruitment. Gaining a better understanding of the nuances of industry practice, when the standards are trialled within some companies will be invaluable.

Therefore, we commend further work in this area so that the standards and guidance notes are revised. From the feedback received a focus on the core goals of fairer, transparent and consistent recruitment practices, which are the basis of all modern recruitment, would be easier for companies to understand. The use of more accessible language, free of HR terminology, will also facilitate greater acceptance of the standards. In addition, internal promotions, project-specific staffing allocation, informal external recruitment and casual employment need to be addressed more specifically in the standards and guidance. Project assignments develop experience, so missing out on this has promotional implications. Internal promotions often do not have position descriptions that state specific job requirements. All processes that encourage transparency should be encouraged. Casual employment for site-based work is often at the discretion of site-based managers and labour-hire companies and is not well addressed in the standards.

The approach to gender equity should also be more user-friendly through more straightforward language and explanations of why certain current practices hinder gender equity and the incorporation of examples of good "do-able" practices. For many, it may be going from 0 to 100 per cent, for others 50 to 100 per cent. So, just as the WGEA advanced their implementation in a staged manner, a similar approach is also recommended. By explicitly identifying the end goal, the initial and intermediate steps can be ascertained. Focussing on issues such as unconscious bias training of managers, gender deidentification of CVs, and gender-neutral language in recruitment advertisements and position descriptions are initial achievable steps. In addition, a motivator for

some companies appears to be recognition of their status in an area, so a scheme that recognises and celebrates good practice (e.g., Athena SWAN) could be considered.

The link between the standards, cultural change, and retention needs to be more explicit in the documentation developed in the next stage of this work. It is important as individuals in construction are desensitised to the industry culture. The blame for women leaving is not seen as an industry issue but a woman's issue. Few other industries would be so insular in their perspectives. Various studies have highlighted the extent of this issue, as well as gender bias concerns in recruitment. The use of external consultants and/or inclusion of more women on recruitment panels may assist with these ingrained biases. This proposition is supported by a meta-analysis using 111 research studies. In recruitment decisions for traditionally male roles, it was found that men have a stronger gender-role congruity bias than their female counterparts. They concluded that men could see certain roles as more "masculine" than women did and that men may be "sensitive to changes in the traditional gender hierarchy and may disapprove of women working in male-dominated, high-status occupations." (Koch et al., 2015, page 139).

Recommendations

1. Continuation of this work to account for industry feedback gained through the implementation trials is supported. This evaluation offers some advice in this area, including:
    a. Simplifying the current recruitment standards and guidance notes,
    b. Using language more commonly understood by construction management staff making recruitment decisions, and
    c. Reinforcing the link between fair and transparent recruitment practices and improved gender equity.
2. Amendments of the activities/tasks should be based on industry feedback and consideration given to the adaption of the WGEA resources and the use of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) goals principles. Accountability needs clarification.
3. The MBV trial should also be used to tailor documentation to better suit the capacity of smaller companies (e.g., less than 20) and consider the specific needs of companies with less HR support (e.g., less than 80). For instance, in terms of activities, a good initial starting point could be unconscious bias training of managers, gender deidentification of CVs, and the use of gender-neutral language in recruitment advertisements and position descriptions.
4. A staged approach to implementation could be considered and/or different classification levels with different KPIs adopted to incentivise companies to make changes.

5. The greater alignment of the standards with the WGEA materials and requirements will assist companies of over 100 with implementation. This should be considered within amendments to the documentation, and any resources developed.

6. Internal promotions, project-specific staffing allocation, informal external recruitment and casual employment need to be addressed more specifically in the final recruitment standards and other resources.

7. Good quality resources are needed to assist in the implementation of the standards within the industry. This was recognised by the MBV and has now been funded by the BICC.

8. Informal practices are often used when project work is time-sensitive and casual employees are required. It is recommended that BICC commission research to understand more fully these specific pressures so that practical solutions can be developed that encourage the increased recruitment of women in on-site roles.

8. SAFE RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE TRAINING

8.1 Overview

ACTIONS

Safe Respectful Workplace Training

- Develop training modules tailored to managers and site workers based on existing VTHC Gendered Violence training modules.
- Arrange for 'live' test of training modules.
- Finalise mechanisms & measures to survey/ feedback participants during the live test phase.

The Safe Respectful Workplace Training was part of the retention aspect of the strategy. It was designed to promote a culture of respect for women in the workplace and on site and reduce gendered violence. The training is intended to be those in site management, Health & Safety representatives, and construction workers. The live testing of the modules was conducted on two projects. A pilot of three sessions was undertaken on Project A with site workers (2) and management (1) and Project B with a site management team. It is understood more sessions with site workers are planned on Project B once that stage of this project commences. The VTHC led this initiative, in conjunction with a major head contractor, on behalf of the BICC. The VTHC has yet to undertake the 1-month and 3-month follow-ups with pilot participants, as noted in the original action. This was to "measure/evaluate success in promoting a culture of respect".

OVERALL FINDING

The Safe Respectful Workplace training has been thoughtfully designed and includes strategies recognised to improve training, such as well-devised content, a process of continual improvement, building upon participant understanding, and the use of activities to engage the audience. Adopting an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) perspective on gendered violence resonated well due to its general acceptance within the construction context. The observed three-hour training was well presented and appreciated by the managers within a large head contracting company. The training benefited from the trainer's experience and skills, the audience's general goodwill, and the inclusion of activities (e.g., case studies). At the end of the training, all participants acknowledged a greater understanding of gendered violence, with the majority expressing confidence in dealing with the topic. Even in the three-hour session, some extra time would have allowed further discussions on dealing with issues in practice. The one-hour training for construction workers was not observed, but the level of knowledge developed would be only at an awareness level. Some recommendations are provided at the end of this section, including expanding training for site-based managers and those directly supervising female workers.

8.2 Evaluation approach

Background

Three methods were adopted to collate the evaluation data relating to the Safe Respectful Workplace Training event. These included interviews, observations, and participant feedback surveys. A VTHC staff member and a member of the head contractor's staff were interviewed before the event to understand more about the development and running of the training. An interview protocol was developed for each.

In particular, the interview with the VTHC training manager focused on:

- Development of the training and its key objectives
- Expectations of the program
- Components most meaningful in helping women persist in construction
- Opportunities to collect participant feedback

The interview with the head contractor staff member focused on:

- Involvement in the program
- Objectives of the training from the head contractor's perspective
- Feedback from Project A and expectations of Project B
- Components most meaningful in helping women persist in construction

Both observations and feedback surveys were used to understand more about Safe Respectful Workplace Training. The observation occurred on Project B and involved site management staff. Two experienced researchers undertook the observations, using a standard protocol that focused on:

- Organisation, including arrivals and transition through the events
- Quality of information presented – clarity, complexity of information, requests for more/different information, and audience comprehension
- Level of interest of participants – asking questions, taking part in activities and body language

The training organisers had a pre-prepared pre- and post-surveys, which were used to ascertain any changes as a result of the training, such as:

- Why participants attended the training (Pre-training only)
- Level of understanding of gendered violence (5-point Likert type scale where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'yes, a comprehensive understanding') (Both)
- Understanding of the training's relevance to their workplace (5-point Likert type scale where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'yes, a comprehensive understanding') (Both)
- Whether participant's aims were achieved (Post-training only)

The evaluation team slightly modified the participant feedback survey[16] with a slight change incorporated into one question. This was used to ascertain:

- What had been most helpful, were participants comfortable participating and what they thought could be improved
- Whether participants would recommend the training to others
- Whether participants felt confident and whether they have any ideas or plans they want to put into action

8.3 The development of the Safe Respectful Workplace Training

The VTHC has had a successful Gendered Violence in the Workplace campaign in place for approximately two years. The training aims to "build a collective understanding of gendered violence as a widespread workplace issue and draw out skills and organising strategies to stop it". This program looks at gendered violence as part of an OHS framework, and training materials were developed for delivery in a range of workplaces. It explicitly targeted union delegates and health and safety representatives. As the VTHC stated, the training aims to helps individuals and managers understand that "…. there's a duty under OHS legislation ……. there's a duty for workers to be kept safe in the workplace". Although the focus is on gendered violence, the name of the training is quite deliberate "…. the reason we started calling it 'Safe and Respectful workplaces' is because that's what we're aiming for, and that's pretty hard to argue against". This training was typically undertaken over a more extended period to allow for a deeper immersion into the topic. Even with this training period, the trainers found that follow-up advice from participants was often sought. The program had been continually reviewed and improved over time but not used before in the construction context. It was used as the basis for the Safe Respectful Workplace Training reviewed in this section.

The head contractor was particularly interested in this training being developed and implemented due to "women often feeling like they weren't safe at work". They also noted that "although things have changed a lot …… in terms of the management side of things, it really hasn't changed from the trade workforce side of things". This identified why the worksite itself was considered an area of priority. The intent for change was genuine, with the head contractor staff member saying, "…. if there was anything that we could do differently, that would create a better environment on site, we wanted to do that". They also noted a broader benefit to the training "… there are many, many benefits other than just for women, or you know, retaining or attracting women, of having a safe and respectful workplace". In addition, the OHS approach seemed to resonate with them. As the head contractor said, "Just like there are OHS requirements for you in

[16] The original Q6 was altered at the suggestion of the evaluation team from "Did you leave training feeling you have some ideas or a plan that you can put into action?" to "Did you leave training feeling you have some ideas or a plan that you can put into action? What would these be?". This was to elicit a little more feedback.

terms of physical safety on site, there are OHS requirements for you for psychological safety on site".

The trainers have backgrounds in the union movement, an extensive understanding of gender equity issues and previous experience delivering safe and respectful workplace training. Their focus is on the systems and culture that encourage or hinder safe workplaces rather than the behaviour itself. They are well suited to presenting the materials and often work in pairs to provide the training and support each other and the participants. This mode is seen as less threatening for participants and allows greater engagement, discussion and development of ongoing actions.

In addition to the content, which includes engaging with the audience using an immersive educational style, it was felt by the VTHC that the method of invitation and the atmosphere created assisted the program's effectiveness. They considered participants who were invited or encouraged to attend as those who are less likely to be openly antagonistic. The approach the VTHC consider is "emboldening or supporting the group that already was on board", and then there is another group "…. the movable middle who's kind of not really that, sure, but open to ideas". The VTHC consider that it is these two groups that can help structure a new culture. Also, the VTHC trainer noted,

> *Because people can disengage too easily, we try to create a really warm environment, which is what our feedback says that 'it's warm, it's collaborative, there're no stupid questions' …… we work really hard at that. [VTHC staff member]*

In-person training was also considered important by the VTHC from an engagement level. People can disengage, but a trainer who is there can react to that and seek an opportunity to reengage.

> *You just sort of pick up on the body language, pick up on the shuffling of feet or the, you know, the cues that someone's not quite happy with what's been said or disengaged …. we say 'look, I'm getting a sense that you're not really buying what I'm saying. So that's fine. Why don't we talk about it?'. [VTHC staff member]*

The VTHC trainer noted that the training is "…. quite experiential, and not just talking at people", and much time is needed to set the scene, as there is often resistance to this type of content. In addition, "we try to create action from it so that they don't just leave with a huge amount of information".

The complete VTHC Program, known as Safe and Respectful Workplaces', is a two-day program that was modified to a 3-hour training program for construction management and a one-hour program for site workers. One of the concerns seen from the VTHC trainer perspective is that participants don't have time to fully engage with short training. Participants can "say a lot of very glib, great things like, 'Oh, of course, women are equal' and 'No, I don't have a problem with women working on site' and such". However, there is no time for deeper conversations when a comment like "I have women working on site, but it's not my fault that they can't actually do all

the jobs" arises. Challenging stereotypes, a key component of the training, does not seem possible in a shorter period of time. As the VTHC trainer noted,

> *…. some of the best conversations are with older men, who've lived a lot, seen a lot, and have started to really rethink a lot of things about masculinity and macho behaviour. [VTHC staff member]*

The head contractor determined this timing period; however, is more limited than what the trainers would consider as ideal. Resourcing was a prime consideration from the head contractor's perspective, and after negotiations, this training time was agreed upon for the pilot program. From the VTHC perspective, the one-hour training for the workers was considered particularly tight. It was considered that only the key concepts could be covered. The suggestions of further sessions and a greater focus on training for Health and Safety representatives were put forward to overcome some of this. Even the three-hour session was considered difficult, but the trainer recognised that it allowed time for activities.

In the first project, Project A, the VTHC program was adapted and trialled over three sessions. It is understood that two were with workers and one session with managers. The original plan was to train both the site management group and subcontractors using a 3-hour workshop. In addition, 100 site workers would be trained using approximately 10 x 1-hour sessions. Each 1-hour session would comprise a small group of 10 people, mixed from different subcontractors, based on a percentage of how many workers each subcontractor had on site. The subcontractors provided a list of potential attendees, including foremen and supervisors, and it was assumed that they recommended those they believed would be willing to participate. The head contactor organised the groups to provide a representative mixture of trades and employment levels, and the training sessions were to occur during work time.

The original Project A design was interrupted by COVID-19 restrictions. This meant only 30 workers and managers participated. A process of continual improvement did, however, occur. Both the VTHC and the head contractor were consulted after each of these sessions. As the head contractor stated,

> *And after each session …… we'd have a conversation about that didn't work, how things were received or what we could do better…. so, it would end up something that was specific for our industry. [Head contractor staff member]*

While no female site workers were on this particular site, the intention was that a number of female site workers were to be given employment on site to see the effect of the training and if it did lead to the retention of the female site workers. As the head contractor stated, they would "give it a real crack". The training could not continue due to the COVID-19 situation. Once that abated in 2021, the focus shifted to training on Project B. The head contractor may consider including a commitment to Safe Respectful Workplace Training within future tender documents for subcontractors, which would make the roll-out of training easier to attain.

In the second project, Project B, only the current management team had undertaken any training at the time of this report. This training was observed and outlined in section 8.4. Further training will be rolled out to the site management team, subcontractors, and workers later in 2021 and where possible female apprentices and workers will join the workforce.

Project A: Worker training pilot

Project A worker training covered:

- Introduction – legal obligation to be respectful at work.
- Discussion of some examples.
- Discussion on actions to take when witnessing unsafe work practices.

The definition of gendered violence was provided:

> *Gendered violence is any behaviour, action, system or structure that causes physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm to a worker because of their sex, gender, sexual orientation or because they do not adhere to dominant gender stereotypes or socially prescribed gender roles. (VTHC, 2020)*

In particular, the OHS requirement aspect of this was emphasised. Like any other OHS issue, the risk of gendered violence can be "*managed, mitigated, and eventually eliminated*". It was also noted that anyone could perpetrate it regardless of their gender, sex, or sexuality. This introduction proved too long (given the one hour) and was "*tweaked*" to be more concise in the following sessions.

The participants discussed examples of not be being safe at work. The head contractor was quite surprised by the level of interaction amongst the construction worker group.

> *I think everyone thought that they would just sit there and not say anything, but in actual fact, they really participated in what was going on.* [Head contractor staff member]

The examples in the first session were not construction-specific and were revised for the following sessions to increase relevance for the participants.

The last section of the training included a discussion on actions to take when witnessing unsafe work practices. It was seen in each session that there was not enough time to cover this, despite ongoing adjustments to provide more time. When group members were asked to provide/discuss their own examples, the head contractor stated,

> *Everyone had a story to share, and then it sort of turned into a 'So what should I do?' …. and that's kind of where I was hoping it would get to, is that.* [Head contractor staff member]

From the VTHC perspective, they found participation levels varied. They commented,

Last time we did it, we had a couple of younger guys who were really engaged or seemed to be and were really positive and talking, but you had others who were just staring into the distance. [VTHC staff member]

Over years of presenting the training, they have concluded that it is more effective if you want to change workplace culture, to have voluntary participation in such training as "…. they are more powerful going back out into their workplace".

Overall, the evaluation team understands that participants were mostly engaged and willing. It was particularly advantageous that the trainers were part of a union as they "spoke their language". The financial commitment required by subcontractors had to be negotiated but has now been written into subcontract tender documents that workers will be required to undertake this training during work hours. No feedback forms were available, so they are not reported.

Project B: Management training overview

Project B site management training covered the same as the worker training, but more materials could be explored, and a greater depth of understanding developed due to the longer time frame. A typical program is provided in Table 13.

Table 13: Typical Program for Management Training (3-hour)

Timing	Topic
5 mins	Acknowledgement of Country and housekeeping
15 mins	Activity 1: How Do We Know We Are Unsafe At Work?
15 mins	Activity 2: How Do We Know We Are Safe At Work
5 mins	Is it realistic to think we can achieve safety in the workplace? Why / Why Not?
15 mins	Definition of Gendered Violence and what it looks like
10 mins	Activity 3: Have you seen gendered violence manifest in your workplace?
10 mins	What Women told us? (use RMIT research report).
15 mins	Activity 4: How does Gendered Violence play out in the workplace for different groups?
20 mins	Activity 5: How did we get here? Assumptions and powerful ideas
15 mins	Video of school children discussing gender inequality when playing soccer
15 mins	Impact and injury: Establishing Gendered Violence as an OHS Hazard
15 mins	Identifying Gendered Violence
20 mins	Gendered Violence identifying the risks
10 mins	Responding to Incidents of Gendered Violence – Do's and Don'ts
5 mins	What are you going to do?
	Close

The manager's program commences with an understanding of existing knowledge of the participants and then moves into definitions, examples and possible responses to gendered violence. Participants engage through responses to questions and case study scenarios, both individually and in small groups. Gendered violence is presented from an OHS perspective connecting hazards with risks to "get them to think about their own workplace and what might be happening".

The 3-hour training session for head contractors was evaluated for this report. The VTHC used the pre-workshop questionnaire to gauge the current level of knowledge, enabling the trainers to fine-tune their materials. Participants were also asked to complete a survey and feedback form at the workshop's conclusion. This is part of the continuous improvement loop for the trainers and demonstrates good training practice. The case studies and scenarios used in training were adapted to be construction-specific and appropriate to the managerial level.

8.4 The Safe Respectful Workplaces Training for managers

The Safe Respectful Workplaces Training for managers was held on 5 March 2021 at the Head Contractors' site management offices. The meeting room was well equipped and had appropriately spaced seating provided. The training was delivered by one female facilitator/trainer who presented online due to COVID-19 associated difficulties. While this was not ideal, especially for the presenter, the session went well.

The participants included eight head contractor management staff and four observers. Two female managers and six male managers were present. They included very senior managers and managers based in site office and site roles. Three of the six male managers explicitly stated that they were pleased to be invited. For the sake of reporting, participant responses have not been numbered as this could potentially identify them. Of the four observers, two were from a union (one was online, and one was there in person). The other two observers were part of the evaluation team.

The VTHC specifically requested that the pre-training survey be administered. The trainer wished to understand better how people had come to the training, the likelihood of resistance, current roles, and what they already know about the topic. The workshop commenced at 8am and concluded on time at 11am. There was a ten-minute delay at the beginning with a lack of sound through the audio system. The participants were checking their phones but were also anxious to commence. One participant said, "Let's just start", with agreement from others. All participants became engaged, and after the *Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners*, the training began. Contacts for supports were provided, and the participants were also referred to the Company Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

The workshop followed the prearranged program for the session (refer to Table 13). The 3-hour workshop did not have a planned break, but a further technology malfunction provided a small

respite later in the session. While there were some general conversations after the workshop, most participants left promptly.

The following includes observations relating to different activities and sessions within the training.

Activity 1 and 2: How do you know if you are unsafe/safe at work?

These activities were aimed to get participants to identify what they 'want to' and 'don't want to' feel at work. It started with the unsafe aspects. One participant was quick to respond. He spoke about anxiety, bullying and harassment and believed that anxiety is a good natural response. The trainer responded to this and then encouraged the others, who initially were hesitant or looked a bit uncomfortable. In the end, six of the eight responded. Discussion points included 'feeling' unsafe and the concept of physical and psychological safety. Specific issues relating to COVID-19 protocols in the workplace that contribute to anxiety were also raised. The focus of the conversation shifted to more human elements required in safe workplaces, including trust, respect, values and morale. Another participant said, "you need to treat people as humans, not as numbers and respect that people have lives outside" and that "morale is the key to safety". Another person added the need to be your authentic self. Trust in the company and their systems and processes were also discussed. All participants expressed confidence in the head contractors' systems to keep people safe. When the trainer asked, "Do you know who to ask?" the group said, "Yes, of course". This discussion helped the participants understand that everyone has the right to feel safe at work and challenge them around any practices that have or need to be changed.

Definition of Gender-Based Violence

The definition of gender-based violence was presented, and the trainer asked for some reactions. This raised issues relating to "not just women" and the use of the word "violence, particularly with respect to non-physical actions".

The facilitator offered an alternative definition of 'violation', which seemed to resonate better with many in the room. One participant reflected, "violence has morphed into something more than just physical". Another observed that 'witnessing' was included in the definition, leading to a discussion on not speaking up, which, to which someone else commented, "people could see silence as an approval of this behaviour" and the responsibility to speak up when witnessing gender-based violence.

One person who had been the first to speak initially continued to be a vocal contributor. However, at this stage, there was only one participant who was yet to volunteer any response. The active contributor offered many examples from his role, with many of these related to socially prescribed expectations of construction workers. There was a discussion about socially prescribed gender roles as well as bullying versus gender-based violence. The trainer very clearly identified the differences between bullying versus gendered violence. The participant then spoke further on bullying, stating that "Union reps and site managers have a really important role in ensuring that everyone is okay at work". He also noted that issues like these need to be responded to very

quickly, and the trainer agreed that “you shouldn’t let things fester as it can get out of hand if they’re not dealt with quickly.”

The trainer noted that today’s workshop was primarily about women and LGBTQI. However, another participant talked about men been undermined or excluded. He went on to say, “it’s not just about women and LGBTQI”. There was some agreement on this from the other male participants. Overall, the group engaged well with the materials and discussion. It was interesting to observe the body language, which gradually shifted from an initial level of reserve. Many who had been sitting back (some with folded arms) started to lean forward and engage more fully. By this stage, participants looked more receptive and engaged with the training than they had at the start.

Activity 3: Have you seen gendered violence manifest in your workplace?

After reflecting on the safe/unsafe discussion, the participants were asked to reflect if they had seen gendered violence in their workplaces. This allowed them to relate the definition to their experiences, thus strengthening understanding. The group was split in two for some discussions around witnessing gender-based violence. Both groups talked readily, were engaged in the content, and could quickly provide examples of when they had witnessed gendered based violence. The participant, who had not previously spoken– automatically led his group in discussion and reported back to the main group. He reflected on how, when he came through as an apprentice, no one was openly gay, and there were no women. He noted, “So when you were different, it was very hard, and it’s great to see that that has all changed a lot”. He then commented back to the early session and confessed, “when I first saw that word violence, I found that very confronting. I find this all very enlightening”.

Many examples related to LGBTQI, but one participant provided an example of a socially awkward young male who was targeted with naked women's pictures. The participants now recognised this as gender-based violence. One participant stated that as a woman, “I have to be very careful that I am safe, and I have to do that all the time”. A male colleague found this “really eye-opening” that someone today should feel vulnerable and said, “It’s really useful to hear other people stories and their experiences as they are real, and it did happen to somebody”. Another participant indicated that he has only once worked on an almost all-female site, and it was only then that he realised what it must be like to be a woman in the construction industry. There was also some reflection on changes over time, such as there no longer being naked pictures of women on walls of the site shed.

The workshop by this stage had been going for approximately one hour. Most people have checked their phones at least once, albeit briefly, but all were clearly engaged. One participant was concerned about reports of an earthquake in New Zealand and so was checking more frequently.

What women told us?

The facilitator referred to the RMIT research report that noted how women felt isolated; they were yelled at in the face, asked opinions and then dismissed, were told they should get a 'girls job', and generally, they were belittled. The trainer noted, of the examples provided, "we could not even make up ones that were worse". She asked the group for their opinions.

The participant, who had been quite vocal said it was "disgusting". Another introduced the possibility that there are differences between site-based workers and office-based workers but also noted: "It's hard to eliminate it as it's a passive social type of thing sometimes". Some discussion ensued, unconscious bias issues were mentioned and the fact that "women will often speak up in a meeting, and then a bloke says the same things, and they are the ones listened to". He also spoke of being in a meeting where a senior woman was asked to make coffee by someone who arrived on site and the need to be aware of value judgements.

The facilitator noted that we all have an unconscious bias or "a bit of a blind spot that can be sometimes hard to identify", but that the critical point is to be aware of the value judgements we make. She then led an intelligent discussion about power and imbalance and the fact that people bully vulnerable people, and sometimes the system can make them more vulnerable. She notes that women on site can be one in a team of fifty and asks, "who has the power in that workplace?". A participant, who was younger, responded and said he feels that the balance in the office is close to 50–50 but noted it is "rare to see women on site". Another noted that women in the office are more junior and have much less authority. A discussion ensued on how gender balance does not necessarily mean power equality. An excellent example was then added by one of the group members regarding a design firm that boasted they were 50-50 but basically, "all the old white guys are the directors - so it's not really the percentage that counts it's the number of women in power and authority".

One of the observers provided real examples of overt sexism and targeting a young woman who the perpetrator felt was the weakest person, reinforcing the OHS issues that arose from gendered violence. These include anxiety, PTSD, sick leave, and distraction which could lead to accidents.

Activity 4: How does gendered violence play out in the workplace for different groups?

A discussion on how gender-based violence plays out for groups other than women, particularly men and LGBTQI workers, ensued. It was generally agreed that any differences from the stereotypical male could make one vulnerable whether individuals are socially awkward or otherwise viewed as less than "masculine". One participant also mentioned it even extended to vegetarianism, having witnessed male vegetarians being called 'faggots', as it is seen that there is something wrong with you as a man if you don't eat meat. Reference was also made back to the awkward younger man and the sexually explicit images. This lively discussion outlining a range of personal stories and experiences from graffiti on site, inability to discuss gay marriage, gay men being bullied on site. Another participant noted they had met a worker at a barbeque with his male partner who was afraid he would report this back. He stated that "the alpha male is still very

dominant". He noted a turning point regarding the gay marriage debate occurred when someone on site stood up and said, "Well, my son's gay", and from then on, people started to become more accepting. The trainer noted that stories are valuable and can change people's opinions. However, it was generally agreed that we should not have to rely on stories or personal experiences to change opinions.

It was now about halfway through the workshop, and due to internet issues, the facilitator needed to log out. It was apparent that people needed a break. There was some light-hearted chatter, and the facilitator was able to reconnect within 5 minutes.

The second half of the workshop seemed more rushed, and the participants seemed slightly less engaged until the last activity with increased checking of phones. It may be that the very brief break showed them how many emails and work-related items were waiting to be managed.

Activity 5: "How Did We Get Here?" Assumptions and powerful ideas

Participants provided examples of where they had obtained their ideas and assumptions about behaviours and expectations. Examples were given from childhood and the outside influence of factors such as media and books. There was an interesting group discussion around whether traditional concepts came from a history of men as "the hunters" while women had been "the nurturers", as well as the idea of women needing to be "protected" so that they could bear children. This led to a conversation about the use of women in the military and construction historically being seen as dangerous and requiring physical strength. However, it was noted that nowadays, "most tasks don't need you to be physically strong and nothing should be dangerous." Some commented on growing up with the notion that "women were housewives, and their role was to be in the house and raise kids". That facilitator noted that in a previous workshop, one participant stated that "women can't do formwork and they can't swear". The discussion concluded by noting that males tend to be the leaders and hold power and authority in female-dominated industries such as nursing and teaching. A participant observed that "it's very hierarchical even in health, where there's lots of women, and the men tend to be at the top".

"The Girls": A video of school children discussing gender inequality and sport

The next activity led on well from activity 5 and used a video, based in a Melbourne primary school, called '*The Girls'*. The video, produced by the VTHC, interviewed Year 5 boys and girls about playing soccer. The girls were articulate and could clearly identify that they were being excluded and the reasons. The boys appeared almost completely oblivious or misinterpreted things to suit themselves. One participant stated that they found the video "very disturbing", while another asked where the boys got their ideas, "the boys seem blind to the treatment of the girls". Another considered the boys to be "feeding off other boys" behaviours and encouraging each other. It was commented that such behaviours reduced the ability for someone to speak up. Overall, the video seemed to make a substantial impact on the group. These children were

relatively young, and the young girls were already experiencing this form of gendered violence was quite shocking to them.

Impact and Injury: Establishing Gendered Violence as an OHS Hazard, Identifying Gendered Violence

Two aspects of the training were combined in order to complete within the time frame. This not being done in a flustered or rushed manner demonstrated the skill of the trainer. The trainer did a quick recap on the definition and the impact of gendered violence. During this, it was effective that she checked in with the audience to ensure that they all had a similar understanding and understood the implications. The whole group seemed to be still engaged despite having had no real break. It was then decided to go through a couple of cases that varied in complexity. Unfortunately, this activity had to be quicker than planned as there was not much time - but the group were fine and seemed to follow the examples well.

The examples presented varied in complexity, and the participants were asked to say whether or not they were gendered violence. For instance, one was about Hayley, who had a new haircut, which someone at her work said was 'nice'. It was agreed that that was a reasonably neutral comment and not gendered violence. Another example was Marcelle, who starts calling a person THOR because he throws down his hammer when he gets angry. One participant mentioned that he "had called this one out" on something similar and showed some real insight into this particular issue. The trainer outlined the nuances of this example, explaining "what can be seen as a joke by many may not be a joke by others" and the need to think about the situation, the power relationship, how he reacts and if they are okay - maybe or not maybe - a hammer is very intimidating.

In the next example, Keith asks Mario if "he is a Mrs", relating to the fact he was gay. The group identified this as not a suitable workplace conversation, and "people do not need to go into the ins and outs of their sexual activity". It was agreed that this could be considered gendered violence.

In the following example, Ben walked into a toilet, and a sign said, 'XXX is a pussy'. All participants felt this was a problem, and as it occurred in a public place and 'pussy' being a negative term, the intent was to imply XXX was "not much of a man".

The final example was about two women, Ashley and Margo. They were friends, but then one of them started 'slut shaming' the other. One participant gave an example of a similar case he had witnessed and how this was a gendered violence example. Overall, the group did well at identifying what was and was not gendered violence, and the activity finished with the trainer providing some further brief examples. These examples covered jokes, graffiti, nicknames and inappropriate questions or conversations in the workplace. The group again did very well at identifying gendered violence and also understanding why that was the case.

Gendered Violence - Identifying the Risks

Participants were placed into four groups in this part of the training, with each group of two or three provided a different detailed case study. They were asked to reflect on the material already covered and then determine the problem in their case and some appropriate responses and actions. “What should they do?”. This gave all participants some hands-on experience in examining a situation and developing some actions. Each group worked cooperatively, listening to all views, and they seemed to identify the problem quickly. Two participants worked relatively quietly on their problem. However, the rest of the groups had quite animated conversations, respectfully discussing what actions to take while allowing each other to put forward their different ideas and thoughts. All participants were engaged, thoughtful and focused on gaining some sort of consensus to report back. These examples were more nuanced than those previously presented, and while some were straightforward, others were seemingly less so based on the extended conversations. Individual conversations could not be heard, and the observers did not want to impose on the discussions by moving around various groups. Each group was meant to report back on their case study; however, there was only time to cover two.

The first was related to a private Instagram account (owned by a female employee, Amy) becoming public knowledge on site, which created disrespectful attitudes and comments among the other employees. Everyone agreed that the poor behaviour needed to be called out, and some practical solutions were offered, including awareness training and discussing the behaviour in a regular toolbox meeting. One participant raised the issue of gaining Amy’s permission to do so. Another noted that he would hold a toolbox without her and “I’d lose my shit and reprimand them”. The trainer brought them back and spoke about the need to check in with Amy and then talked about having toolbox meetings relating to the general principles of sexual harassment and gendered violence.

The role of the bystander was also raised, and the need for them to act in particular circumstances. The trainer then brought out other points that the group had not considered, demonstrating that although they had some knowledge, some of their approaches needed further work. The trainer importantly pointed out the duty to keep people safe, which is an employer obligation, and spoke about some of the legal issues. No group had yet voiced this, and she highlighted that the toolbox does not have to be done immediately. The immediate concern is to make sure that Amy is safe and to directly shut down the offenders. These cases were an excellent way to deal with the content matter, and it would have been valuable to have had even more time to go through the case in more detail.

The second case study presented was about a female supervisor (Kirsten) whom a male carpenter was undermining. This example was less straightforward, with blurred lines of communication and authority, second-hand information and allegations of rape. One participant became quite vocal and led some of the discussions using some good practical ways of dealing with the issue. He had been relatively quiet up until this time and touched on the fact that the manager has a legal

responsibility. Another manager was also insightful and went through the details of the case study methodically. There was much talk about 'duty' versus 'commitment to confidentiality', and this proved to be a case they found challenging to resolve and decide exactly what they should do. They all agreed that the carpenter needed to be removed (so as not to endanger others) and that Kirsten was made safe. Otherwise, there was a range of different viewpoints. The legalities of the situation were also raised, and some robust discussion ensued. As the session needed to finish soon, the trainer needed to put a close to this discussion. As the trainer noted in a debrief session after the training, although a clear-cut solution was reached with a large head contractor, she knew they had in-house resources to call upon and what the examples did was raise the nuances of real-life cases. These examples do demonstrate the complexities of these cases and the fact that a group of managers were not completely clear on what to do. Without in-house resources, managers in other companies may struggle.

What are you going to do?

The summary and conclusion of the workshop were rushed as it was nearly 11 am. Follow-up surveys were distributed during the final summation, and everyone focused on completing them rather than addressing the final question – "is there one action you will take away?" Most participants said they wanted more training on this topic, increased awareness, and more discussion on the topic, which seemed genuine. One participant indicated he had not been comfortable with the term violence and thought that violation was a good word to use, and the takeaway was that "we need to all speak up when we see somebody being violated". However, the aim of the question was for participants to reflect on a single action they personally would carry out once they left the workshop in order to make their workplace more respectful. One participant said they wanted to know about what other support services were available and indicated they would check out "what else is available outside the organisation". This aspect could have been more easily addressed if the facilitator had been in the room and responsible for handing out the survey sheets.

Summary

Overall, the event was well organised and presented. The venue was appropriate, comfortable and allowed for spacing of participants due to the COVID-19 situation. The head contractor organised the event well and handled technical difficulties appropriately and with no fuss. While the presenter had to present virtually and therefore had to manage the difficulties of not being physically in the room and two technical issues, they did an excellent job and handled everything calmly and professionally. The technical issues meant that some valuable time was lost, but the presenter managed to complete the materials within the allotted time. The slight overrun was primarily due to some discussion which was difficult to rein in. Only one person commented that it would have been better to have the presenter in the room in the evaluation form, while another commented on the need to keep check of the time. It only ran as well as it did due to the presenter's skill and experience in the area.

Most of the participants noted on the pre-training survey that they had been asked to attend, but several demonstrated more than an obligatory level of interest. For instance, one wrote, “I am happy to do so”, and another “I was asked to attend but have also volunteered as I feel this training is very important to me.” Most participants wanted to know more about the topic and how it could be applied in their roles. However, some had broader aspirations, such as an interest in how it could be carried across all sites and another stated, “…… how can I apply these learnings and further educating my colleagues and others, as well as calling out the inappropriate behaviour?”

The way the materials were structured and presented meant that the audience knowledge was built upon throughout the session. The definition of gendered violence was unambiguous, and the discussions led by the presenter ensured that the nuances of the topic were explored. The link to OHS was very appropriate for this audience as they are well aware of physical health issues, making the materials much more relatable. The presenter checked in with the audience and used different ways to ensure the participants had understood the materials. Using examples, video and case studies was an excellent way for the participants to gain further understanding. Additional time exploring the case studies would have benefited the audience.

The pre-training survey reported the average participant level of understanding of gendered violence at 3.4, with responses ranging from 2 to 4.5, on a 5-point Likert type scale, where 1 was ‘not at all’ to 5 was ‘yes, a comprehensive understanding’. This average increased to 4.7 in the post-training survey. All those who responded with ‘2’ pre-training increased to a ‘4’ post-training, with all respondents having a higher score in the post-training survey. While this was a very small sample, it indicates that participants felt they had a better comprehension of gendered violence after the training.

When asked, “Do you think you have an understanding of the way this training will relate to your workplace?” the pre-training responses ranged from 3 to 4.5. This question in the post-training ranged from 4 to 5, and on one survey response, the participant had extended the scale to 10 and then circled this number, indicating a new awareness from their 4.5 pre-training response, which perhaps was questioning their initial assessment. While again this was a very small sample, it does indicate participants had a better comprehension of the content.

When asked in the evaluation form what could be improved, along with the physical presence of the presenter and the technical difficulties mentioned previously, the only suggestions made related to having more time. In particular, more time for discussion on the case studies was suggested. Therefore, some extra time could have helped overcome some of the unresolved issues with the final case study and allowed the other two case studies to be examined.

Three participants made some positive comments, with one saying, “I think it was perfect. We discussed many topics and got different opinions”. When asked whether their main aims for attending the training were achieved, all but one participant said ‘yes’ in the post-training survey. The participant stated they wanted more time for discussion. However, others were positive in

their responses, with someone stating, “Absolutely, it was even greater than I anticipated because I was not aware of the extent and context and now what we may be able to do/take action”.

In the evaluation survey, all participants except for one said they would recommend the training to others, with one participant saying, “No, more discussion before rolling out as a training unit”. This seems to indicate some hesitancy and uncertainty regarding extending the training to workers on site. When asked if they felt confident dealing with sexual harassment and gendered violence as a workplace issue, nearly all participants said ‘yes’, but two qualified their answer, demonstrating a level of understanding of the complexity of these issues when applied to the workplace. As one said, “Do you ever feel confident?” and the other “…. I will need to see how this works out in practice or my ability to recognise”. When asked how comfortable they felt participating, all responded positively except one participant who said they were not comfortable, “…. but I warmed and became more involved”. This comment reflected our observations and changes in body language and engagement during the training. Many responded that the facilitation had been excellent, and the content was more complex and engaging than anticipated. Nearly all participants were appreciative of the training, but some recognised that the materials were quite confronting. For instance, the use of the word violence and that even future generations will face such challenges demonstrated in the video, “… it's important to know and understand that these issues still need so much work to make changes for our own children and future generations. Thank you”.

Participants appeared to develop a good understanding of the topic and were cooperative and respectful, allowing each other the opportunity to speak. Throughout the training session, it was apparent that people opened up and became more comfortable. They engaged with the materials and, in particular, in case examples or small group discussions. They wanted concrete advice about how to help those most directly affected and how they could manage ethical issues that may arise when maintaining a safe workplace. It would have been good to have additional time to explore these cases further.

8.5 Overall findings and recommendations

The Safe Respectful Workplace training is a thought-provoking program of training developed by the VTHC. Their approach to developing and adapting the program for construction appears robust, including reviewing and revising materials, engaging with the head contractor, and developing construction-specific examples that resonate with the intended audience. The head contractor has been very supportive of the rollout of the program and involved in material development. Taking an OHS perspective to gendered violence resonated well with the observed participants in the 3-hour training program. The training was skilfully presented and well received by the managers within a large head contracting company, despite the trainer presenting virtually due to a COVID-related issue. The training benefited very much from the experience and skills of the trainer, the general goodwill of the audience and the use of case study examples and other activities. The facilitator kept participants on track, provided excellent prompts to engage them

and offered avenues to explore different viewpoints. While it worked well being presented virtually, it is preferable to have the presenter and participants in the same room, particularly with less cooperative audiences. This presence would allow for greater engagement with the presenter, for the presenter to pick up on participant body language and reduce time lost due to technical difficulties (which often emerge).

All participants acknowledged a greater understanding of the topic after the training. The use of specifically tailored activities enhanced the training. All participants were engaged during all the discussions and seemed to 'warm up' as the training progressed. The audience's receptiveness and the non-judgemental approach and atmosphere created by the trainer worked well. The trainer kept checking in with the audience to ensure a common level of understanding was reached. Once the 'why' and 'what' aspects had been covered, the 'how' to deal with incidences aspect was covered. It seemed participants needed more advice about how to help those directly affected by gendered violence and how to manage any ethical issues that arose while maintaining a safe workplace. The audience wanted more answers to "what do we do?" type scenarios, and it would have been beneficial to have additional time to explore this further. In observing this training, it was apparent that only an awareness level of knowledge could be developed in a 1-hour training session.

The head contractor who supported this initiative was pleased with the VTHC training and stated:

> *What we've done now at XXX, will lay the foundations for us as a company moving forward about what we're going to do in that space …. it will definitely become part of our norm. [Head contractor staff member]*

Their viewpoint is that large builders need to take this type of training on so that the subcontractor base of the industry becomes more aware of gendered violence issues, and that is how "we start to get some real traction within the industry."

Recommendations

1. This training is of value, and ways should be sought to expand it to other construction companies and worksites.
2. The smaller group training format seems to be working well, and it is recommended to keep training sessions smaller.
3. The current idea of training most workers in a 1-hour session and then the site management team in a 3-hour session should be considered as a starting point. Where possible, further training should be considered, particularly to upskill and empower managers, subcontractors, and female workers' direct supervisors. Some ideas include:
    a. Give consideration for the 3-hour training be split into 2 x 2 hr sessions. The initial session could cover the 'why' and 'what'. Participants would then have time to reflect and draw on their own experiences in a follow-up session focussing on the

'how'. This would allow more time for valuable discussions on case studies and real-life experiences.

b. If the training of workers is limited to a 1-hour awareness session, key personnel within the contractor and subcontractor staff, who have some influence amongst workers, should receive additional training to empower them to identify and manage gendered violence cases and reinforce a culture of respect. This should not fall within one individual's remit and resources provided for their support.

4 In future training, particularly in smaller companies without a HR department to seek further advice from, provide a one-page summary of the key points, a list of resources, where to seek further advice and where to get support. This should be tailored for managers and workers.

5 For each case study considered in the 3-hour training, a handout resource of ideally "what to do" would be useful. This type of feedback is essential where some case studies do not get discussed by the group. However, it may also be helpful for participant recall.

9. EBA CLAUSES AND PROCUREMENT

9.1 Overview

ACTIONS

The Women in Construction strategy outlined that it would undertake the following work in consultation with relevant bodies:

Insert into the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA):

- The National Employment Standard for the right for flexible work
- A Gender Violence clause
- A clause that commits employers to promote the engagement of women

In addition:

- Amend the Amenities Code
- Develop a Code of Conduct or an EBA clause that identifies appropriate and inclusive behaviours and identifies and prohibits offensive behaviours
- Develop a complaints process that protects people's confidentiality

As well as piloting programs that assist in attracting, recruiting and retaining women in construction site roles, the Women in Construction strategy also outlined a series of actions to improve the employment conditions for women on site. These included changes to 2021 – 2023 CFMEU Template Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA), amendments to the Amenities Code and the development of a code of conduct and a complaints process. Providing more flexibility at work was regarded as a strategy to assist women, particularly those with carer responsibilities.

The Gender Violence clause, renamed the Safe and Respectful Workplaces clause, and the Code of Conduct are considered strategies to encourage workplace culture change. The changes to the amenities code recognise women's personal needs on site. Finally, a confidential complaints process was considered necessary to ensure inappropriate behaviour could be acted upon.

Although the amenities code was not changed, a new clause was included in the latest EBA taking the requirements to exceed those in the current compliance code. In addition, new EBA clauses relating to the right to flexible work and safe and respectful workplaces were inserted. An appendix on sexual harassment was included, which contained a complaints procedure). A clause on encouraging the employment of women and other minorities was duplicated from the old EBA in the new one (Part 11 Industry modernisation). In addition to this outlined work, the Building Equality Policy was developed and refined and is currently being considered by the Victorian Government. This would be considered as one of the most important pieces of legislation for women in construction.

These items are not evaluated but merely reported in this section of the report. Time will be the judge of their effectiveness in changing culture and improving gender equity.

9.2 The EBA clauses

In 2020, the unions, the Master Builders Association Victoria, and major employers negotiated the new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA). The template agreement "[EMPLOYER NAME] and the CFMEU (Victorian Construction and General Division) Enterprise Agreement 2020-2023" was the result. Through a process of negotiations, various new clauses were added to the EBA aimed at addressing gender equity and cultural change. We understand the core intent of these new clauses was uncontested by all the parties involved and merely the actual wording was discussed. All of the stakeholders involved in this EBA process understood the benefits, which help facilitate progress on these issues. While the new EBA clauses do not cover all women in site-based roles, rather just those covered by the EBA, it is understood that changing EBAs is often the first step and encourages change throughout the industry. These are significant initial steps by the industry, especially in contrast to what had been in place previously. It should be noted that as EBAs change every few years, these are not necessarily guaranteed to be in future agreements. In addition, not all women are employed under these agreements. Other methods need to be pursued so that all women are better accommodated and protected in the future.

Amenities

Clause 70 'Amenities for females' was added to the 2021 – 2023 EBA. This replaces Clause 67.8 in the 2016 - 2018 EBA, which stated:

> *Separate amenities for women will be provided. These shall include changing facilities that meet the standard for Sanitary Facilities as per the Workplace Code of Practice for Building and Construction Workplaces or its successor. (Page 75)*

The Facilities in Construction Compliance Code, 2018 replaced the *Building and Construction Workplaces Code of Practice*, 1990 and the clauses pertinent to women are reproduced in Table 14. As can be seen there has been a requirement for sites of more than ten people to have separate toilets for women since at least 1990. As the 1990 version was in place at the time of the earlier EBA it is apparent that the new clauses go beyond both the 2016 - 2018 EBA and the provisions in the 2018 Compliance Code (which would cover all workers in construction).

Clause 70 is reproduced in Table 15. When viewed in conjunction with the existing amenities provisions, Clause 69 requires that the quality of female amenities be no less than the standard of male amenities and seemingly the mandatory requirement of separate amenities for women, even when the workforce is less than ten. The wording does appear flawed as it would imply a site of fewer than 10 workers, with no women, would still need to provide a separate female toilet - it is likely the word "less" should have been "more". Even with this change, Clause 70 is an improvement on the Compliance Code, which would regard unisex toilets as acceptable for all sites of less than 10 workers.

Table 14: Comparison of the 1990 and 2018 facilities requirements for women.

Building and construction workplaces code of practice, 1990	Facilities in construction compliance code, 2018
2. Clothes and changing facilities 2.1 The facilities should include: (a) adequate secure facilities for hanging employees' clothing; (b) adequate facilities for drying clothes; and (c) changing facilities where the nature of the work performed requires the employee to change clothes. Separate changing facilities should be provided where twenty or more employees are working at any time on the site. A clear space of not less than 0.5 of a square metre for each person changing clothes at any one time should be allowed in calculating the size of the changing facility required. This space should be in addition to that required for lockers or other facilities. Heating such as strip heaters should be provided. Where both males and *females* are employed at the site and separate changing facilities are not provided, changing rooms with enclosures or compartments that can reasonably and with privacy be used by persons of either sex should be provided. A suitable bench or seat should also be provided to allow a person to sit when dressing or undressing. **7. Sanitary facilities** 7.1 The principal contractor should ensure that sanitary facilities are provided at each site. The facilities should comprise closets, urinals, and where *females* are employed, sanitary disposal units. The facilities should be connected to a sewerage system 7.4 Where both males and *females* are employed at the site and the total number of employees exceeds ten, separate sanitary facilities should be provided. In the case of toilets for *female* use, the allocation for urinals should be replaced by closets and at least one in three closets should be provided with a sanitary disposal unit. Where both males and *females* are employed at a site and the total number of employees does not exceed ten, there may be a facility for use by males and females provided that: (a) the closet can reasonably and with privacy be used by persons of either sex; and (b) the closet contains a sanitary disposal unit.	50. Separate male and *female* toilet facilities need to be provided where there are both male and females onsite. 52. In the case of toilets for *female* use, the allocation of urinals need to be replaced by closets. A sanitary disposal unit needs to be provided in at least one in every three closets. Where *female* toilets are not part of a block of toilets but are single units (for example, a portable toilet), a sanitary unit needs to be provided in each unit. 53. If the exact make-up of the workforce is unknown, toilet facilities need to accommodate both male and *females*. 54. Unisex toilets can be provided where: • the total number of people who normally work at the site is 10 or fewer, and • there are two or fewer employees of one gender. 58. The number of hand washing stations to be provided depends on the number of employees, the composition of the workforce and the type of work being done. Where a separate *female* toilet needs to be provided due to the number of females, separate female hand washing facilities also need to be established. 62. Separate shower facilities need to be provided for male and *females*. However, in small or temporary workplaces where privacy can be assured, one unisex shower can be provided if: • the shower and adjacent change room walls are full height, and • shower and adjacent change room doors can be locked from the inside. 74. Where there are both male and *female* employees at the site and separate change rooms cannot be provided, change rooms with enclosures or compartments that can be reasonably used by persons of either gender with suitable privacy can be provided.

However, it is noted that few sites of less than ten workers would be covered under this EBA.

Clause 70 is reproduced in Table 15. When viewed in conjunction with the existing amenities provisions, Clause 69 requires that the quality of female amenities be no less than the standard of male amenities and seemingly the mandatory requirement of separate amenities for women, even when the workforce is less than ten. The wording does appear flawed as it would imply a site of fewer than 10 workers, with no women, would still need to provide a separate female toilet - it is likely the word “less” should have been “more”. Even with this change, Clause 70 is an improvement on the Compliance Code, which would regard unisex toilets as acceptable for all sites of less than 10 workers. However, it is noted that few sites of less than ten workers would be covered under this EBA.

The EBA also allows for requests to be made for a fridge, lactation room and feeding room. However, it is noted that this is not a mandatory provision and would be left to the head contractors' discretion. The EBA also provides more clarity around the location of the female amenities, allowing women to voice their opinions about this. It is known that this choice of location is important to women due to safety concerns.

Table 15: Clause 70 from the 2021-2023 Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

70	Amenities for females
70.1	At a minimum, the following amenities must be provided on each site for female workers: (a) a separate ablution block, change room and closet with sanitary bin and privacy closure must be provided for female use only. (b) on any site with less than 10 workers of which two or less are females a separate female portable toilet (with sanitary bin) will be provided solely for the use of the females. (c) Upon request, an appropriate private room with a fridge for use as a lactation room.
70.2	In determining the location of the amenities the Employer must consider the most appropriate balance of privacy, safety and security.
70.3	If the female workers and the site management agree that a better alternative is available, then that alternative may be adopted.
70.4	Any site where the anticipated number of workers will be greater than 10 then the amenities for female will include a separate toilet (with sanitary bin) from the commencement of the project.
70.5	Where, as a result of consultation, a need for a feeding room is required then such a room will be provided.

Safe and Respectful Workplaces

Other provisions adopted to improve the retention of women include the new addition of Clause 67, Safe and Respectful Workplaces. The clause also established an additional appendix – Appendix K – for dealing with sexual harassment complaints. The Safe and Respectful Workplaces clause recognises that everyone is entitled to a working environment free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying. The employer's responsibility is to ensure that they comply with relevant legislation, including the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic). The clause directly references women rather than all workers. It clearly states that it is everyone's responsibility to respect women's right to work without being subject to unacceptable behaviour and disrespectful actions. Clause 67 then goes on to outline examples of poor behaviour. Being explicit within the EBA about these behaviours makes a strong statement, as does the link to OHS, a well-understood concept within construction. In addition to women working on site, this respect must also extend to site visitors and members of the public.

Appendix K – Sexual Harassment Principles is broader in its application, as can be seen in the following statements:

> *Gendered violence is any behaviour that causes harm to a worker because of their sex, gender or sexual orientation. (Page 165)*
>
> *Sexual harassment in the workplace may take various forms and can be directed at, and perpetrated by, all persons including male, female, transgender and gender diverse. (Page 166)*

This section provides some sexual harassment examples and covers the reporting of sexual harassment. In the section on responding, both the employer responsibilities and consequences are outlined, which can "range from an apology to disciplinary action against the person found to have engaged in harassment (such as demotion, transfer or termination of employment)". Together these sections could be considered as outlining a complaints process.

Flexible working arrangements

Clause 13.4 of the 2021 – 2023 EBA provides a flexible work arrangement, which will encourage women (and others) to request a flexible working hours arrangement, including part-time hours, but under certain circumstances. Table 16 outlines the wording of the clause. While flexible working arrangements are one of the 11 minimum National Employment Standards (NES) entitlements that must be provided to all employees in Australia, their inclusion in the EBA does make this option more explicit to those working in construction.

Table 16: Clause 13.4 from the 2021-2023 Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

13	Contract of Employment
13.4	Flexible Working Arrangement
(a)	The Parties recognise the importance of flexible working arrangements and the right of Employees to make requests under section 65 of the Fair Work Act for flexible working arrangements. An Employee may request a flexible working arrangement if any of the following circumstances apply to the Employee: (i) the Employee is the parent. or has responsibility for the care. of a child who is of school age or younger; (ii) the Employee is a carer (within the meaning of the Carer Recognition Act 2010); (iii) the Employee has a disability; (iv) the Employee is 55 or older, (v) the Employee is experiencing violence from a member of the Employee's family; (vi) the Employee provides care or support to a member of the Employee's immediate family, or a member of the Employee's household, who requires care or support because the member is experiencing violence from the member's family An Employee may use the form provided in Appendix L of this Agreement.
(b)	Note an Employee as described in subclause (a), for example, may request not to work any overtime.
(c)	For the avoidance of doubt, this Agreement permits an Employee as described subclause (a) for the life of this Agreement to request to work less than 36 ordinary hours per week and accrue applicable entitlements including contributions for superannuation under clause 21 and contributions to the appropriate lncolink fund for redundancy under clause 23 under this Agreement on a pro rata basis. The Employer and the Employee must agree on the part-time ordinary hours of work, provided that the ordinary hours of work for any part-time Employee will be a maximum of eight (8) hours per day, Monday to Friday. The ordinary hours of work will be as agreed between the Employer and the part-time Employee, provided that such hours must be less than 36 hours per week averaged over a two-week period. Any additional hours may be worked from time to time by agreement only. The RDO system prescribed by clause 36 will only apply to a part time Employee on a pro rata basis. This means 0:8 of an hour for each 8 hours ordinary hours worked will accrue towards an RDO.

Under the NES, employees (other than a casual employee) who have worked with the same employer for at least 12 months can request flexible working arrangements if they:

- are the parent, or have responsibility for the care, of a child who is school aged or younger
- are a carer (under the Carer Recognition Act 2010)
- have a disability

- are 55 or older
- are experiencing family or domestic violence, or
- provide care or support to a member of their household or immediate family who requires care and support because of family or domestic violence.

The grounds provided in the EBA are the same as those of the NES and include family care responsibilities and some other circumstances. The implications on RDOs and entitlements is outlined. The clause outlines the importance of flexible working arrangements and the right of employees to make requests for flexible working arrangements under Section 65 of the Fair Work Act. However, like the Act, an employee may only request flexible hours if they meet specific criteria, including working "continuously as an employee of this business for the last 12 months". Interestingly this opens up the opportunity for men, who meet the same requirements also to request flexibility. While this clause does not guarantee flexible work, the employer would need to justify any refusal. Appendix L of the Agreement includes a proforma letter employees can use, and the employer and employee must come to a mutual agreement.

Summary

The Women in Construction Strategy set a range of key outcomes that would improve work conditions for women on construction sites. The EBA is now explicit on the rights of women with respect to amenities, flexible hours of work and work environments free from sexual harassment. While some of these are covered by the law and within the National Employment Standards, having them specifically stated in the EBA will hopefully open up the industry to some long overdue change. Beyond retaining the women already working in the industry, these conditions will conceivably attract more women to consider and begin careers in construction roles. These changes have been enabled through an environment of goodwill and collective commitment between employers and unions.

9.3 Building Equality - Code of Respect for Women

The Building Equality - Code of Respect for Women ('Respect Code') was an initiative driven by the BICC and is intended to be voluntary and industry-led. The Code represents a valuable tool to support gender equity in the construction industry. It reinforces the provisions introduced to the EBA and gives practical guidance to employers and employees. The Code aims to:

- Ensure every person understands their legal obligations under bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination laws.
- Create lasting behaviour change by helping people feel confident about creating and maintaining respectful workplaces.
- Demonstrate to women that this industry values their involvement.

The Respect Code seeks to support the process of making the construction industry a better place to work for women. It is grounded in the notion that respect is a fundamental right for every

woman in the industry, and it champions safety, inclusiveness and wellbeing as its core foundations. Useful examples are provided, and the responsibilities of employers and project managers are outlined. One important inclusion is the inclusion of a contact person. The Code states that complaints will be taken seriously, and it assumed the consequences are those outlined in the EBA. The Respect Code represents a useful tool to support gender equity in the construction industry. It works to reinforce the importance of the provisions introduced to the EBA and gives practical guidance to employers and employees.

A copy of the Code can be found in Appendix C

9.4 Building Equality Policy (BEP)

The Gender Equality Act 2020 (GE Act) was put in place to ensure that Victorian public sector organisations, universities and local councils develop plans to implement initiatives to promote workplace gender equality and publicly report on progress against key indicators, including equal pay, recruitment and promotion, and workplace gender composition. The Building Equality Policy (BEP) supports this process and, through government procurement, aims to create training and employment opportunities in building, infrastructure, civil engineering or other capital works. It also recognises the impact COVID-19 has on women's workforce participation.

Victorian government procurement is one of the most significant drivers of the Victorian economy, and procurement decisions, on the whole, have a sizeable impact on the economy, the environment and the community. The BEP introduces actions that address the structural and cultural barriers affecting women via procurement processes. The BEP seeks to challenge existing gender stereotypes, norms and roles within construction and support gender equality in the industry. Taking advantage of the Building Works stimulus package, the following actions are outlined by the BEP:

Action 1 – require suppliers to meet project gender equality targets

Action 2 - require suppliers to engage women as apprentices, trainees or cadets

Action 3 – require suppliers to implement Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs)

These actions will have a direct effect in increasing the number of women employed on government projects. By implementing GEAPs, this will set equal engagement scores for men and women, and thereby increase women's engagement in the industry.

A draft copy of the Building Equality Policy (BEP) can be found in Appendix D

10 CONCLUSIONS

10.1 Overview

The Women in Construction Strategy was designed to "increase women's participation in the trades and semi-skilled 'blue-collar' work in Victoria". The participation rates of women in these roles have not changed significantly since the 1980s, and even with improved training levels, women are either not gaining or not retaining jobs on construction sites in meaningful numbers. Rigid work hours and practices, as well as unsupportive cultures, affect women's retention. Women are also more likely to be involved in casualised, lower-paid employment and miss out on roles due to informal recruitment practices which privilege men.

The strategy targeted three specific intervention points and leveraged change through procurement and employment practices modifications. Some practical strategies were developed and then modified due to the COVID-19 situation for the attraction, recruitment and retention intervention points. This report includes the evaluation of five specific programs of work aimed at increasing the number of women in trade or 'blue-collar' roles and reports on changes made to the 2021 – 2023 CFMEU Template Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) and the development of the Building Equality Policy (BEP). The five programs include:

- Careers day
- The Building Futures website
- Support program for women
- The Recruitment Standards
- Safe and Respectful Workplace Training

The first three of these programs were related to attraction strategies. The following two programs were related to the recruitment and the retention of women, respectively. The actions outlined in the program of work were successfully undertaken by the CFMMEU, Incolink, MBV and VTHC on behalf of the BICC and proved to be of value facilitating the attraction, recruitment and retention of women in trade or 'blue-collar' roles in the industry. The Careers Day was of great interest to young women and careers teachers, and the Building Futures website was considered motivating by young women. The support program was valued by women looking to enter the industry, and supportive organisations will welcome the revised version of recruitment standards after they have been tested in industry. The 'Safe Respectful Workplace' training program successfully increased participants' knowledge, and the training would be of value if rolled out across the industry. The new EBA clauses increase opportunities for women, and the proposed changes in the Building Equality Policy should drive significant change in the area.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews, except for one, were conducted virtually by zoom, as was the focus group. In some cases, further interviews were held if more information was required to understand views and perceptions better. The Careers Day and Safe and Respectful Workplace training observations were done in person, following all COVID-19 requirements and using two experienced researchers.

10.2 Attraction strategies

The attraction strategies sought to break down some of the barriers that prevent young women from considering careers in trades and other site-based roles in the construction industry. As noted, the attraction strategies comprised of three components:

- Careers Day
- The *Building Futures* website
- A support program for women

These programs sought to reach young women, parents, careers teachers, VET/VCAL providers, women ready to enter the industry and potential employers. The strategies aimed to inform young women of career choices and help build an understanding of career pathways. In particular, the first two programs were about making young women, their career teachers, and parents aware of the construction industry, the career choices available and programs of study. It was also designed to demonstrate that women can succeed in this industry and allay fears that may negatively impact teacher or parent support. The support program was used to attract women into the industry and then support them as they enter the industry. A focus of this program was supporting women's transition into the industry and moving from low and semi-skilled roles through to skilled and trade roles.

The pilot Careers Day was evaluated using interviews, observations, and surveys. Key informant interviews with CFMMEU staff members developed an understanding of the approach taken. In addition, these interviews also assisted in understanding how the program components were established, and any challenges faced. Observation protocols and feedback surveys were then developed for the students, careers teachers, and other observers on the day to gauge perceptions on delivery and effectiveness.

The immersive approach, hands-on activities and informal presentation style worked well and engaged and motivated both students and careers teachers. This component should therefore be strongly considered for future iterations. The inclusion of women, particularly younger women, via their presentations and involvement as demonstrators, resonated well with students. It increased student engagement in the day's events and demonstrated that a successful career in the industry is possible. The use of career stations worked exceptionally well, and the inclusion of some more signposting, visual materials and presenter training is recommended to enhance future Careers Days. The differing requirements for young women and the careers teachers should be considered, and future events tailored accordingly.

Overall, the Careers Day was well received and was a positive experience for both students and teachers. It was well planned, organised and executed. Due to this success, the BICC should encourage similar events to be conducted in the future, and the report identifies where some further improvements could be made.

The Building Futures website was evaluated with the use of interviews, surveys and a focus group. Key informant interviews, held with the website development company and the CFMMEU, were used to understand the website development process and inform evaluators on the website's launch details. This assisted in the development of the feedback survey questions and focus group protocol.

At the website launch, which coincided with Careers Day, feedback surveys were distributed to students, careers teachers, and other attendees to gather perceptions of the Careers Day and their initial impressions of the website. A focus group was then held with young trainees to gather more detailed insights into the website. It should be noted that this was held within a week of the website launch, and our understanding is that further work was carried out after the focus group event. The primary purpose of the evaluation was to ensure that the website provided the required information to specific users and that young women, who were the primary target for the site, found it relevant and accessible.

Students and teachers perceived the website to be very appealing and of interest during its launch. Young trainees in the focus group echoed this sentiment and gave further insight into the content and what would be helpful in the construction career decision-making process. The images of young women working in construction were regarded as motivating, and overall, the graphics were very appealing. However, the website should identify its purpose of being focused on on site roles and direct young women to other sites regarding professional roles. Including more material on specific construction roles as well as Victorian-specific construction training information is recommended. Greater use of visuals and videos was preferred over large amounts of text. Overall, the evaluation of the website found it to be an accessible and helpful tool, which with further development, could become an extremely valuable resource for young Victorian women and their career teachers, parents and prospective employers.

The final focus of the attraction strategies was the Support Program, which also had some overlap with issues relating to recruitment and retention of women. The support program for women looking to enter the construction industry was evaluated to identify the outcomes of program involvement, undercover any challenges faced and identify future opportunities if the program was extended. Data were collected using key informant interviews with Incolink staff, who organised and delivered the program, and interviews with ten women who participated in the program.

The overall findings of the evaluation were that the program was impacted by employers' non-engagement and reduced roles due to the pandemic. Despite this impact, the program was viewed as beneficial by female participants. The program provided emotional support and career guidance to women who registered, which assisted them to persevere in finding suitable employment. However, the program was limited in that it was not able to provide employment options for all women involved, leaving many unemployed or employed in precarious jobs or jobs of less interest to them. Future iterations of the program would benefit from increased

employers' engagement and increased support from labour-hire companies. It is also recommended that the guidance provided regarding career pathways, tickets, and resume building be expanded in any further program iterations. Ultimately, this program has the potential to develop into a unique and valuable scheme for women to gain experience and employment in the industry and be a good resource for employers looking to attract female workers.

10.3 Recruitment

The recruitment strategy sought to build the capacity of major builders, subcontractors, and labour-hire operators to attract and recruit women into the full range of trade and semi-skilled roles within the construction industry. A background report was undertaken, and based on these findings, the MBV developed a set of recruitment standards on behalf of the BICC. The report used a sample of seven employers and four women to identify current recruitment practices, and the report also investigated a broad range of issues relating to improved gender diversity. Six standards were developed, along with two sets of guidelines, which included activities and tools, for medium to large and small employers. These standards were evaluated primarily using interviews with the MBV and twelve individuals from ten construction companies responsible for recruitment within their organisations. All companies were emailed a copy of the VBCRS Recruitment Standards, and VBCRS Guidance notes for their company size (small or medium/large) before the interview to ascertain their opinions. The interviews explored the companies' approaches to recruitment, their perceptions of the standards' effectiveness, the ease of implementation of suggested activities, and any improvements.

The interviews found that while most companies were supportive of gender equity, none of the companies fully supported the standards in their current form. Their evaluation of both effectiveness and ease of implementation was not high as would be hoped and suggested using more common everyday language and simplification. Standards 3 and 6 were regarded as more effective, and Standards 5 and 6 were easier to implement when compared with the other standards. The ability of small companies (companies of less than 20 employees) to implement the version tailored to suit them was doubted, and even companies with less than 80 employees may struggle. The use of HR terminology was problematic for those from a construction background to engage with and the use of a formal HR function, while desirable, was more likely in larger companies. The potential for criticism or backlash and the worry for many was that implementation could become a superficial exercise that did little for gender. It is understood that the standards are to be trialled, so this would be an ideal opportunity to revise the standards. An amended version would benefit from simplified language and modified activities, particularly to suit smaller organisations' capacities. The use of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) goals would also ease implementation. The utility of the standards in measuring gender diversity would also be heightened by explicitly addressing senior appointments, internal promotions, project-based staff assignments, casual labour-hire company recruitment and allocation processes. Finally, it is considered that staging the full implementation and the

introduction of different ranking levels could work well in the construction space and recognising those excelling in this process would allow others to follow. This form of incentive may suit the competitive nature of the construction industry, with many companies seeking to boost their reputations in this space.

10.4 Retention

The retention strategy sought to create a culture of gender equity within the construction industry across all workforce levels. In order to address this aim, the Safe Respectful Workplace training was developed and trialled. The VTHC lead this initiative on behalf of the BICC as they had significant experience in this space. The VTHC reviewed and modified existing training and continued to modify it for two groups of participants using industry feedback from the first training sessions. Training modules were tailored to suit managers and health and safety representatives (HSR) (3-hour session), and construction workers (1-hour session). These were piloted across two construction sites, with the rollout affected by the COVID-19 situation.

One three-hour training program was evaluated through observations, interviews and participant surveys. The focus of the evaluation was on the development and delivery of program components, the quality of the information provided, the level of interest of participants and future improvements for the programs. Overall, participants found that the Safe Respectful Workplace training was well devised and effective. The VTHC used an engaging non-confrontation style and built participants' understanding of the topic area during training. In addition, the use of activities, a video and case studies served to engage the audience. The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) perspective on gendered violence worked well as it resonated with those in the construction industry. At the end of the 3-hour training, all participants reported a greater understanding of gendered violence than reported in their pre-training survey, with the majority expressing a level of confidence if they needed to deal with the topic. However, the training could have been further enhanced with some extra time to allow for more discussion of the case studies.

While the 1-hour training for construction workers was not observed, the level of knowledge attained in this training would only be awareness level. While this training would be of value, it is recommended that future iterations could be improved with the expansion of training for site-based managers and those directly supervising female workers. Finally, the longer-term value of the training could also be enhanced with the distribution of some take-home resources.

10.5 Procurement and EBA clauses

The final actions were the development of new EBA clauses, the Victorian Building Equality - Code of Respect for Women (‘Respect Code’) and the Building Equality Policy (BEP). These were not subject to evaluation but rather reported. These relate to all three areas of attraction, recruitment and retention.

The new EBA clauses specifically addressed amenities for women workers and flexible working arrangements, and new provisions also detailed the requirement to provide a safe and respectful workplace free of sexual harassment. Whilst everyone has a right to a workplace free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying, having this specifically addressed in the EBA is an important step. The separate appendix on Sexual Harassment Principles, describes the forms that sexual harassment and gendered violence can take in the workplace and details the consequences that can come of this type of behaviour. While a number of the new EBA provisions are covered previously or by other sources (e.g., the National Employment Standards) their inclusion via the clauses and appendix reinforced their importance and relevance for the construction industry today.

These new provisions are further reinforced with the development of the Respect Code and the Building Equality Policy. The Respect Code not only described the forms that disrespectful, unacceptable and illegal behaviours can take, but also outlined steps that individuals can take in response to such incidents. This can be easily used by the industry to call out poor behaviour and provide the avenue of redress.

The Building Equality Policy compliments all these new additions and works specifically to increase the number of women working in construction on government projects. The government, as a client with a considerable source of industry revenue, can use this policy to drive change within the industry and increase female representation. It makes the industry much more accountable for improved gender equity which has been problematic for generations.

Overall, these developments represent beneficial changes to the circumstances of women in the industry and are a crucial part of an ongoing process of changes in this area.

10.6 Summary

The key question orienting this evaluation was "How did the program actions support the attraction, recruitment and retention of women in on site-construction roles in Victoria?"

In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions were addressed:

1. How were the actions within the program undertaken?
2. What were the outcomes of the actions, and how did these match the intended outcomes?
3. What recommendations could be made to the program to yield improved outcomes in the future?

The Women in Construction Strategy has effectively achieved its goals within the three intervention points: attraction, recruitment, and retention. The original program of work was affected by the COVID-19 situation, and modifications had to be made to address the world pandemic. The three intervention points were identified, and pilot programs, identified for each, were undertaken. These enacted programs have been beneficial in increasing the knowledge of

young women looking to enter careers in the construction industry, supporting those seeking to enter the industry, and promoting cultural change to reduce barriers women face.

The programs were, on the whole, relevant and effective in addressing their objectives. They were run successfully and were well received by most participants and industry stakeholders, suggesting future iterations could have a longer-term effect on the number of women regarding construction as a place to be and a place they could stay. Participant feedback showed that program activities were generally well-tailored to meet their objectives and worked well to engage those involved. This highlights that program designs were well thought out and suited the intended audiences. For example, the graphics and format on the Building Futures website were tailored well to engage the audience.

When looking at impact, we have found that the pilot programs enacted as a part of this strategy have been beneficial in increasing the knowledge of young women looking to enter careers in the construction industry, supporting those in the industry and encouraging cultural change in the workplaces men and women inhabit. Young women, who had an interest in construction, felt that they could pursue a rewarding career within the industry. When perceived career options are coupled with an increased awareness of opportunities, personalised support and specific actions that address gendered biases, they foster improved representation and inclusion of women in the industry.

While further revision and tailoring are suggested, particularly with regard to recruitment standards as value is seen in future planned work. Modifications to the EBAs mean that women covered under these agreements will have better access to part-time work, amenities, safer and more respectful workplaces. These changes will importantly highlight to employers the need for their increased efforts in the gender equity space. These changes should improve working conditions for women and facilitate women's greater involvement and retention in the industry. This is also reinforced via the Respect Code and Building Equality Policy. However, further dissemination to the industry (e.g., via the changes to the Amenities Code) should be pursued.

The industry has been described as insular. This and other reports have found it to be defensive of its practices and resistant to change. The reason for lack of gender equity is most often placed on women themselves as they have decided not to opt-in or opt-out early, with few companies regarding their own role in improving the situation. Cultural change has proven difficult in this industry, and government intervention appears to be the best resort at this juncture. Interestingly, this report found that the site-based positions often allocated to men towards the end of their careers are the ones considered most suitable for young women starting their careers. Changing the mindsets of individuals and companies to be more accepting of women in more mainstream construction site roles, particularly for women over thirty-five, will take time.

As any change to cultural norms is a slow process, it is very important to have women supported in their employment journey through a dedicated support program and encouraged in their participation with the implementation of recruitment standards, government policies, and

industry agreements. It is recommended that all elements of this program be refined, maintained, and expanded in the future until the number of women reaches a critical mass. While further revision and tailoring are required, and these are outlined in each program evaluation, elements that are used to incentivise companies to act would be beneficial to encourage further change occurring in this space. Construction, by its nature, is based on competition, so harnessing this tendency could help drive the industry to become more inclusive by improving the representation of women and other marginalised groups. The success of the strategies signals promise concerning the attraction, recruitment and retention of women and improving gender equity within the construction industry. Ultimately, ongoing targets, ongoing supports, unconscious bias and other training and transparent recruitment processes appear to be the most effective way of making some change occur in this space, which has been stubbornly resistant to change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Sample Feedback Survey for Careers Day participants (Students)

Appendix B:

Recruitment Standards: Victorian Building and Construction Industry

Guidance Notes for the Victorian Building and Construction Industry Recruitment Standards:

Small Business Guidance

Medium to Large Business Guidance

Appendix C:

DRAFT Building Equality - Code of Respect for Women

Appendix D:

DRAFT Building Equality Policy (BEP)

Appendix E:

RMIT Research Report – Part 1 Summary Report

Appendix A:

Sample Feedback Survey for Careers Day participants (Students)

Student Feedback Sheet

1. How did you hear about this event?

_____

_____

2. What was your main motivation for coming today?

_____

_____

3. What did you think of the new *Building Futures website* that was launched today?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt excited to see the *Building Futures* website about careers in construction	1	2	3	4	5
I thought the website looked attractive	1	2	3	4	5
I thought the website looked easy to navigate	1	2	3	4	5
I liked the graphics and images presented	1	2	3	4	5
I think the website has content which will be useful to me	1	2	3	4	5
I will definitely visit the website after today	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend the website to other students	1	2	3	4	5
I think the website does not present anything new	1	2	3	4	5

4. Please read the following statements and indicate your level of agreement in relation to today's event.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I found the event to be interesting	1	2	3	4	5
I found the event to be useful/helpful	1	2	3	4	5
I found the event to be motivating	1	2	3	4	5
I found the event easy to follow	1	2	3	4	5
I learnt something new today about careers in construction	1	2	3	4	5
I felt comfortable participating in the conversations and activities	1	2	3	4	5
I now feel more excited about choosing a career in construction	1	2	3	4	5
I now feel more confident about choosing a career in construction	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend this event to other students/young women	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B:

Recruitment Standards: Victorian Building and Construction Industry

Guidance Notes for the Victorian Building and Construction IndustryRecruitment Standards:

Small Business Guidance

Medium to Large Business Guidance

Recruitment Standards: Victorian Building and Construction Industry

Towards gender mainstreaming building and construction roles

Introduction to the Victorian Building and Construction Recruitment Standards

The building and construction industry plays a significant role in Victoria's economic growth and is one of the largest employers of full-time workers. However, the industry has long grappled with attracting and retaining women employees across all employment levels. Less than 12% of all employees in the industry are women, and less than 2% of those women are in Trades occupations or operational roles. Few women enrol in or complete Trade apprenticeships. Women workers are more likely to be employed as traffic controllers or in other ancillary roles, rather than in more lucrative operational roles. The industry also finds it difficult to attract women to professional roles such as construction management or engineering.

There is a strong ethical and business case for women to have as equal access to roles and opportunities in the building and construction industry, as their male counterparts.

- Committing to gender diversity and inclusion practices and increasing and retaining women in the industry (across all levels and in all sectors of the building and construction industry) will positively affect organisational innovation and competitive advantage

- An inclusive Victorian building and construction industry, collaborating and fully committed to attracting, recruiting and retaining a diverse, skilled and talented workforce will be more sustainable, more locally

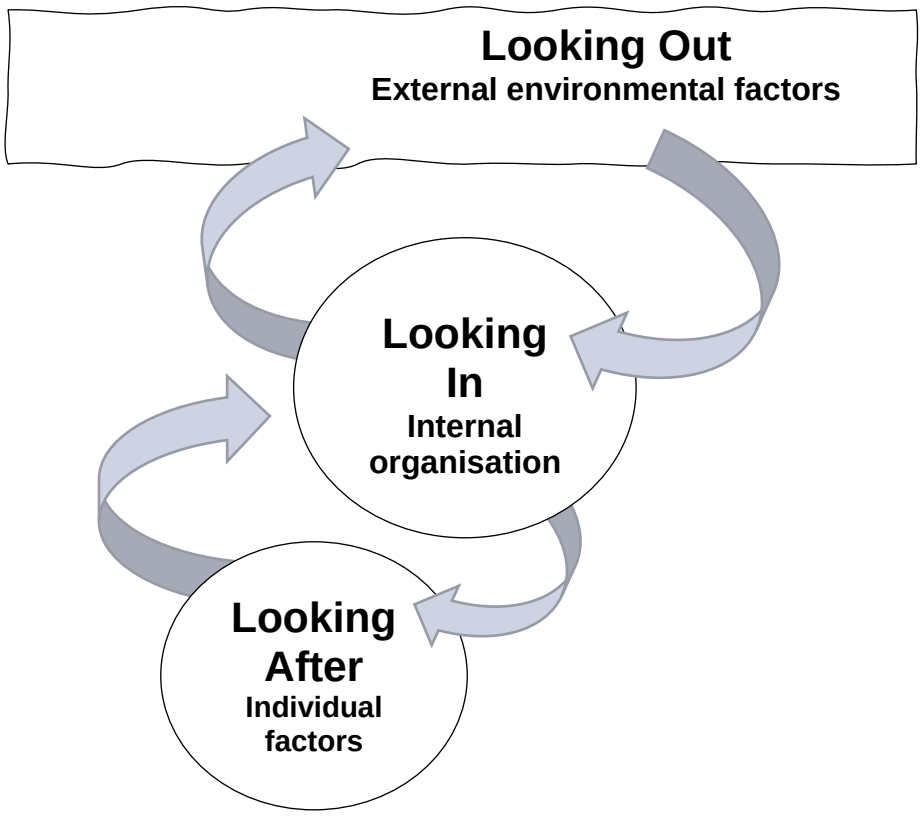
and globally competitive, more creative and innovative and will serve to greatly enhance the lives of all Victorians.

The following Victorian Building and Construction Recruitment Standards (VBCRS) have been developed as a 'whole of industry' intervention to increase the participation of women workers across all sectors, levels and roles within the building and construction industry.

Framework for the Victorian Construction Industry Recruitment Standards (VBCRS)

The VBCRS framework consists of three, interrelated levels:

- 'Looking Out' Factors – these focus on strategic management activities and organisational future proofing
- 'Looking In' Factors– these focus on organisational culture, systems infrastructure, and gender mainstreaming activities
- 'Looking After' Factors – these focus on effective attraction, recruitment, and retention of women within the organisation



Women in Construction

Summary of the Victorian Building and Construction Industry Recruitment Standards

Looking Out **(Analysis)**	**Standard One**	The organisation underpins strategic business planning and people capability decisions with ongoing industry and external analysis.
	Standard Two	The organisation holds itself accountable for employing and developing a gender diverse workforce.
Looking In **(Formulation)**	**Standard Three**	The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy.
Looking After **(Execution and Alignment)**	**Standard Four**	The organisation has a strong employer brand and appropriate employee value propositions (EVP) for all workers in the business (permanent and contractual).
	Standard Five	The organisation has implemented a formal hiring and retention strategy based on modern recruitment methods.

	Standard Six	The organisation has implemented effective metrics, evaluation criteria and reporting mechanisms across all recruitment activities.

‘Looking Out’ Standards (Industry Level)

Rationale for the ‘Looking Out’ standards

A strategic management mindset improves organisational clarity around long-term business viability and market competitiveness. Organisations need to be informed and knowledgeable about local and global industry developments as well as political, socioeconomic, and technological trends, in order to attract and hire the best possible talent. The ‘Looking Out’ standards acknowledge that business success is impacted as much by external factors as organisational internal practices and employee composition. These standards also recognise that all organisations, in every sector of the industry, are accountable for increasing the number of skilled women workers in the building and construction industry.

Standard One	The organisation underpins strategic business planning and people capability decisions with ongoing industry and external analysis.
Standard Two	The organisation holds itself accountable for employing and developing a gender diverse workforce.

1. **The organisation underpins strategic business planning and people capability decisions with ongoing industry and external analysis**
   1.1. Strategic management activities underpin organisational goals, objectives, and strategies
   1.2. Environmental scanning research, industry trend analyses and reviews of business threats and opportunities are consistently undertaken

1.3. Knowledge of existing and future industry skill requirements and work patterns inform business capability analyses and hiring decisions

1.4. Strategic workforce planning processes recognise the importance of all employees, and the broader supply chain, to organisational competitive advantage and provision of value to clients

1.5. Integrated data management actions align strategic goals with operational processes

2. The organisation holds itself accountable for employing and developing a gender diverse workforce

2.1. Organisational leaders publicly support and enhance, at the industry and organisational level, gender mainstreaming in the Victorian building and construction industry

2.2. Organisational attraction and recruitment strategies focus on improving the image of the organisation (including gender mainstreaming organisational marketing materials, social media, and work sites) and the broader industry

2.3. Strategic business goals include targets and accountability metrics for increasing the number and availability of skilled women workers

2.4. Organisational collaboration with industry stakeholders[1] to reduce structural barriers that hinder women from participating in the building and construction industry is a business priority, and includes actions such as:

2.4.1. Developing, implementing, or participating in industry and organisational outreach programs that focus on attracting and recruiting women

2.4.2. Assisting with provision of grants, scholarships, incentives, work placements and other ongoing opportunities to increase the recruitment and retention of women

2.4.3. Formalising existing career journeys and creating future careers, pathways and options that appeal to potential women workers at the operational and professional occupational levels

[1] Such as: Government, other industry businesses, Associations, Unions, GTOs, Educational Institutions, and supply chains

2.4.4. Actively contributing to industry conferences, seminars, portals and repositories around gender inclusivity best practices and successful recruitment strategies

‘Looking In’ Standards (Organisational Level)

Rationale for the ‘Looking In’ standard

The ‘Looking In’ standard recognises the need for innovative and transformational approaches to grow the participation and retention of women workers in the building and construction industry. A comprehensive gender diversity and inclusion strategy will enable organisations to understand how organisational systems impact on the lived experiences of women workers as well as analyse the structural barriers to their attraction, advancement, and retention. Providing a road map for change, the gender diversity and inclusion strategy needs to be aligned with organisational goals and strategies, championed by organisational leaders, and incorporate key performance indicators (KPIs) that hold all staff accountable for progress and success.

Standard Three	The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy.

3. The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy

3.1. The gender diversity and inclusion strategy is aligned with organisational strategic management activities

3.2. The gender diversity and inclusion strategy is funded sufficiently

3.3. An aligned, company-wide systems infrastructure (technology, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices) underpinned by a continuous improvement and business excellence mindset supports the strategy

3.4. Organisational leaders are publicly committed to gender diversity and inclusion and have the necessary competencies to alter the status quo in organisational thinking and behaviours

3.5. The organisation has fostered effective change management skills and competencies to enable the organisation to adapt to the changing internal workplace environment

3.6. Organisational culture is founded on principles of equality, inclusivity, and mutual respect

3.7. Gender violence, harassment and discrimination workplace training programs are implemented and mandatory across all organisational occupational levels

3.8. The organisation has prioritised and implemented targeted actions to increase the attraction, recruitment, and retention of women into trades and semi-skilled roles

3.9. The organisation had prioritised meaningful career development and progression of existing women workers who are labourers, cleaners, traffic controllers or working in other ancillary operational positions

3.10. Targets have been developed for increasing the participation of women professional workers and actions implemented to achieve those targets

3.11. Suppliers and clients are conversant, accountable, and aligned with the organisation's gender diversity and inclusion strategy, policies, and practices

3.12. The organisation prioritises selecting and contracting sub-contractors and suppliers who have demonstrable gender equality practices and outcomes within their own businesses

3.13. Continuous improvement activities, accountability mechanisms, evaluation and performance metrics, progress monitoring and Board reporting underpin the gender diversity and inclusion strategy

'Looking After' Standards (Individual Level)

Rationale for the 'Looking After' standards

The 'Looking After' standards aim to assist organisations to employ from a broader pool of talent, increase the attraction and retention of women workers and improve overall organisational productivity and performance. Highly successful organisations critically review the breadth of employee journeys throughout their business and reflect on the outcomes of those journeys. They

understand why their organisational vision and goals attract quality candidates. Successful organisations also provide employment conditions that best nurture and retain talented and skilled workers across all occupational levels in their business.

Standard Four	The organisation has a strong employer brand and appropriate employee value propositions (EVP) for all workers in the business (permanent and contractual).
Standard Five	The organisation has implemented a formal hiring and retention strategy based on modern recruitment methods.
Standard Six	The organisation has implemented effective metrics, evaluation criteria and reporting mechanisms across all recruitment activities.

4. **The organisation promotes a strong employer brand and appropriate employee value propositions for all workers in the business (permanent and contractual)**

   4.1. A gender inclusive employer brand attracts women to consider working in the building and construction industry

   4.2. Gender inclusive employee value propositions appeal to potential women workers and supports the retention of existing workers

   4.3. Employee value propositions include at least the following components: Remuneration (pay parity), benefits and rewards, career development (technical and leadership training, mentoring, networking, coaching, career guidance, other work placements or quality project opportunities), working conditions (amenities, flexibility and carers leave, teams, recognition) and culture

   4.4. Employee value propositions are segmented for different roles and levels

4.5. Proactive and innovative recruitment marketing approaches are employed to attract as diverse a candidate pool as possible for all roles in the organisation

4.6. Specific training plans and learning programs are developed for all women employees that include technical and skills training as well as employability, financial acumen, communication, and assertiveness skills instruction

4.7. Enrichment training and supervision programs are developed and implemented to assist women workers with limited site experience to rapidly advance their onsite knowledge and experience

4.8. The organisation provides appropriate gender-separated amenities onsite, at all times, for all projects

5. The organisation has implemented a formal hiring and retention strategy based on modern recruitment methods

5.1. Human Resource and people management best practices are valued and prioritised in the organisation

5.2. Managers and personnel involved in recruiting processes are trained in modern recruitment methods, gender inclusive principles and performance management

5.3. A gender mainstreamed and formalised hiring and retention strategy (incorporating policies, procedures, templates, matrices, and guidance material) has been implemented

5.4. The hiring and retention strategy reflects the employee lifecycle of workers and is aligned with the gender diversity and inclusion strategy as well as organisational goals, objectives, strategies, and policies

5.5. Continuous capability analyses are performed as part of the strategic workforce planning process

5.6. Realistic and meaningful position descriptions are developed and revised for all professional and operational roles

5.7. Managers at all levels are trained in conflict resolution, communication techniques and in surfacing unconscious bias and underlying assumptions

6. The organisation has implemented effective governance including metrics, evaluation criteria and reporting mechanisms across all recruitment activities

Guidance Notes for the Victorian Building and Construction Industry Recruitment Standards

Small Business Guidance

Rationale for the Victorian Building and Construction Industry Recruitment Standards (VBCRS)

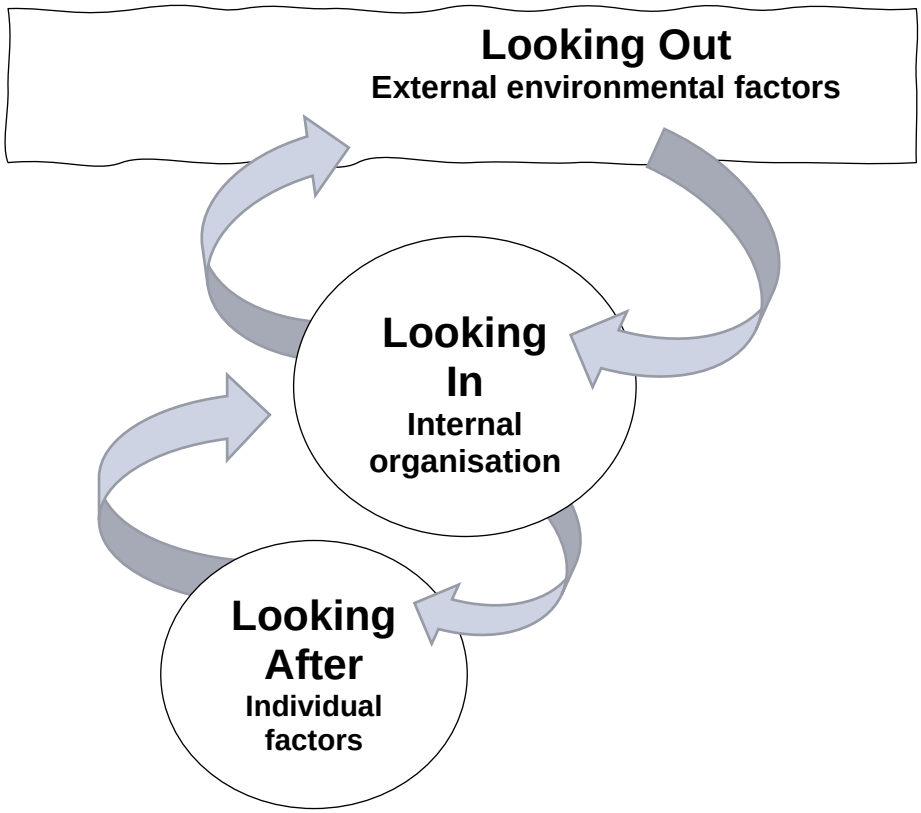
A gender diverse and inclusive building and construction industry will align Victorian businesses with their global counterparts in terms of innovation, customer satisfaction and business competitiveness. To increase the number of skilled women workers at all occupational levels, organisations need to attract and recruit differently. Increasing the participation and retention of women workers requires explicit support from organisational leaders and cultural change at the Industry as well as at the organisational level. The execution of recruitment and retention activities in a strategic context develops purposeful, inclusive behaviours and an environment conducive to industry change.

Summary of the Victorian Building and Construction Recruitment Standards

Looking Out (Analysis)	**Standard One**	The organisation underpins strategic business planning and people capability decisions with ongoing industry and external analyses.
	Standard Two	The organisation holds itself accountable for employing and developing a gender diverse workforce.
Looking In (Formulation)	**Standard Three**	The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy.
Looking After (Execution and Alignment)	**Standard Four**	The organisation has a strong employer brand and appropriate employee value propositions (EVP) for all workers in the business (permanent and contractual).
	Standard Five	The organisation has implemented a formal hiring and retention strategy based on modern recruitment methods.
	Standard Six	The organisation has implemented effective metrics, evaluation criteria and reporting mechanisms across all recruitment activities.

The VBCRS framework consists of three, interrelated levels:

1 Looking Out Factors – these focus on strategic management activities and organisational future proofing
2 Looking In Factors – these focus on organisational culture, systems infrastructure, and gender mainstreaming activities
3 Looking After Factors – these focus on effective attraction, recruitment, and retention strategies



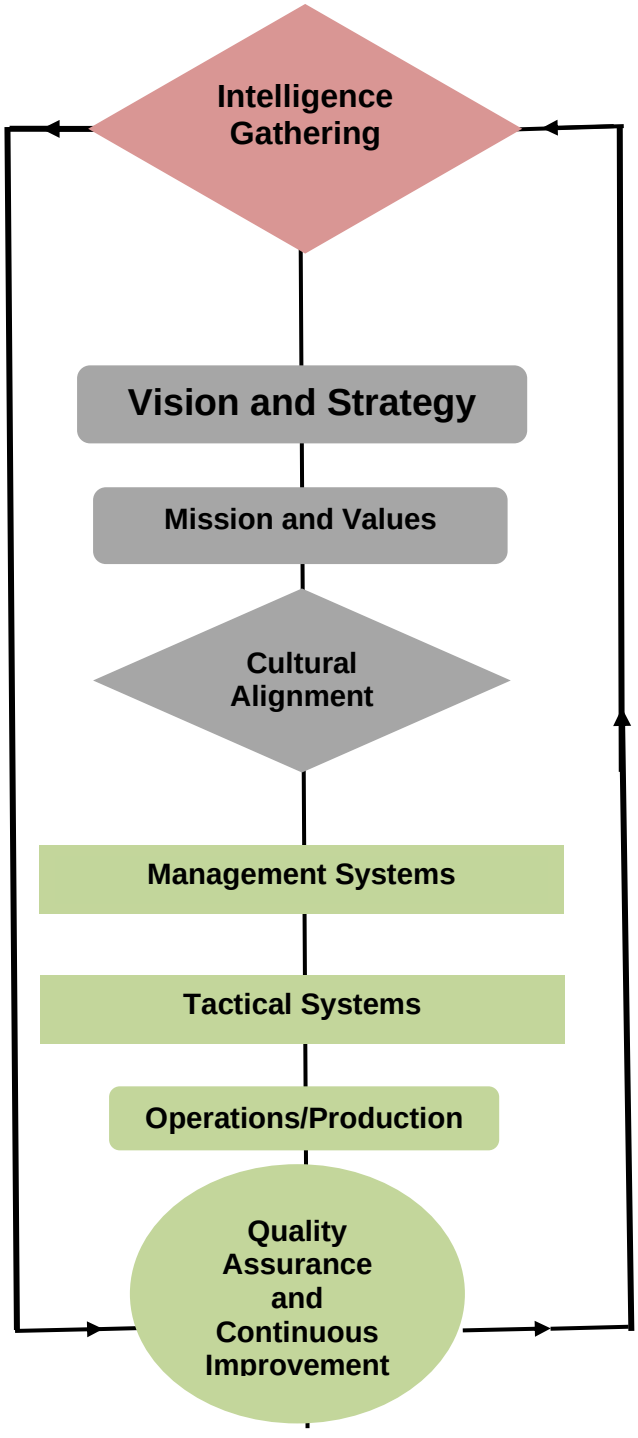
These guidance notes provide checklists of suggested best practice activities and tools for organisations to assist with implementing and maintaining each of the Victorian Building and Construction Recruitment Standards within a gender diverse and inclusive strategic context.

The interactions of environmental, organisational and individual factors outlined in the VCBRS are diagrammatically represented in Figure One and Figure Two in this document:

1 Figure One – depicts the relationship between corporate strategy and goals, business intelligence, business systems and operational recruitment activities (page 4).
2 Figure Two – illustrates the connection between a formal gender diversity and inclusion strategy, employer branding, recruitment activities and the retention of employees (page 10).

Further reading and resources to assist with developing a gender diversity and inclusion strategy can also be found towards the end of the guidance notes.

Figure One: Implementing a gender diverse and inclusive recruitment strategy within a strategic context



Looking Out - Analysis

Where are we now?

Activities/Tools

- PESTLE / SWOT analysis
- Scenario thinking
- Competitor analysis e.g. Porters
- Stakeholder analysis
- Industry trends and insights
- Conferences / Seminars
- Workforce trends / skills
- Gender analysis
- Salary and career parity reviews
- Governance and Board reporting

Looking In - Formulation

Where do we want to go?
How will we get there?

Activities/Tools

- Gender diversity and inclusion strategy
- Board and Management unconscious bias and diversity training
- Employer brand development
- Leadership architecture and development
- Attraction/ social media channels
- Content messaging
- Communication plans
- Change management – readiness, leadership commitment and execution
- Workforce planning actions
- Novel outreach programs
- Strategic recruitment targets
- Succession planning

Looking After – Execution and Alignment

How are we doing?
What's next?

Activities/Tools

- Enterprise architecture
- Data management and maturity
- Hiring and retention strategy execution
- Employee value propositions
- Employee journey mapping
- Employee life cycle
- Employee development
- Implicit bias testing and training
- Performance management
- SMARTER KPIs
- Compensation and benefits
- Mentoring programs
- Flexibility arrangements
- Awards / Employee Contracts
- Assertiveness and Resilience Training
- Financial and commercial acumen training
- Reporting and metrics

‘Looking Out’ Standards - Checklist

(Analysis)

Preamble for the ‘Looking Out’ standards
As business success is impacted by external factors as much as by internal practices and employee capabilities, developing a strategic-focussed mindset will improve business and retention outcomes. Pursuing knowledge of local and global industry developments and technology trends and socioeconomic and political issues will help small businesses to understand their existing and future skill needs and where there might be skills gaps. These ‘looking out’ standards acknowledge that all organisations, regardless of size, are accountable for increasing the number of skilled women workers in the building and construction industry.

Standard One: The organisation underpins strategic business planning and people capability decisions with ongoing industry and external analyses.	
Suggested activities / tools	**Tick if complete**
Strategic management activities underpin organisational goals, objectives, and strategies.	
Strategy development is informed by activities, insights, and analytical tools such as: • PESTLE, SWOT, Competitor, and data analysis • Attendance at seminars and trade shows • Researching technology and skills trends.	
Strategies and plans for all business areas (e.g. operations, human resources, technology, policies and procedures, customer service, contractor alliances and quality assurance) are developed, implemented, and aligned.	
Business strategies are underpinned by SMARTER key performance indicators (KPIs). (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound, Explainable/Evaluated and Relative/Revised)	

Staff and contractor hiring is informed by existing and future business requirements and potential skills gaps.	
Organisational culture, employees and the broader supply chain supports quality data capture, analysis, and reporting.	
The business has transitioned from data capture activities to proactive use of data as insights for decision-making.	
Project and client data is regularly collected, analysed, and integrated into strategies, business systems and data repositories	
Quality assurance, continuous improvement, compliance, and data security is a business priority.	

Standard Two: The organisation holds itself accountable for employing and developing a gender diverse workforce.	
Suggested activities / tools	**Tick if complete**
The organisation has taken steps to improve both organisational and industry image.	
Organisational leaders acknowledge there is gender inequity in the industry and commit to being part of the process for change.	
Organisational leaders undertake training to explore their personal unconscious biases and improve their understanding of diversity and inclusion principles.	
The importance of gender diversity and inclusion initiatives are explained, communicated, and upheld throughout the organisation.	
Organisational leaders challenge their organisations to improve the overall supply and retention of skilled women workers within the company.	
The organisation has updated worksites, PPE, company websites, marketing materials and social media platforms to make them more appealing to existing and potential women workers.	
The organisation proactively showcases the career pathways of existing women workers within its business.	
The organisation participates in outreach activities that are attractive to potential women workers such as: • Women-only Open Days • Try a Trade day/week tasters • Women role models visiting local sports, scout and girl guiding groups • Visiting and mentoring school students	

• Offering Career Transitioning and Carers Return to Work programmes • Being involved in local Trade Skills Competitions - sponsorship and hosting • Participating in charity endeavours where participants learn entry level construction skills similar to '**Volunteer it Yourself'** https://volunteerityourself.org/ **or 'Kids Under Cover'** https://www.kuc.org.au/get-involved/	
The organisation has explored barriers (such as working conditions, pay parity, flexibility, carer responsibilities) to women worker participation and retention in their company.	
Strategic business goals include targets and accountability metrics for growing the supply of skilled women workers.	
Targets include improvements to participation, career development and retention of women workers at all occupational levels in the business - from operational roles to senior management.	
The development and implementation of targets is underpinned by organisational goals, culture, and business systems.	
The organisation develops and implements new jobs or career opportunities that specifically target and attract prospective women workers.	
The organisation recognises that it may need to offer additional training and development to women workers to ensure that have equal access to roles and opportunities within the organisation.	
Internal recruiters (and if employed, external agencies) are held accountable for growing the number of women interviewed, selected, onboarded, and retained in the company.	
The organisation incentivises staff to refer potential women workers.	
The organisation has raised the value and prestige of operational work within their company and mapped clear pathways to successful careers within the organisation starting from entry-level operational roles.	

‘Looking In’ Standard - Checklist

(Formulation)

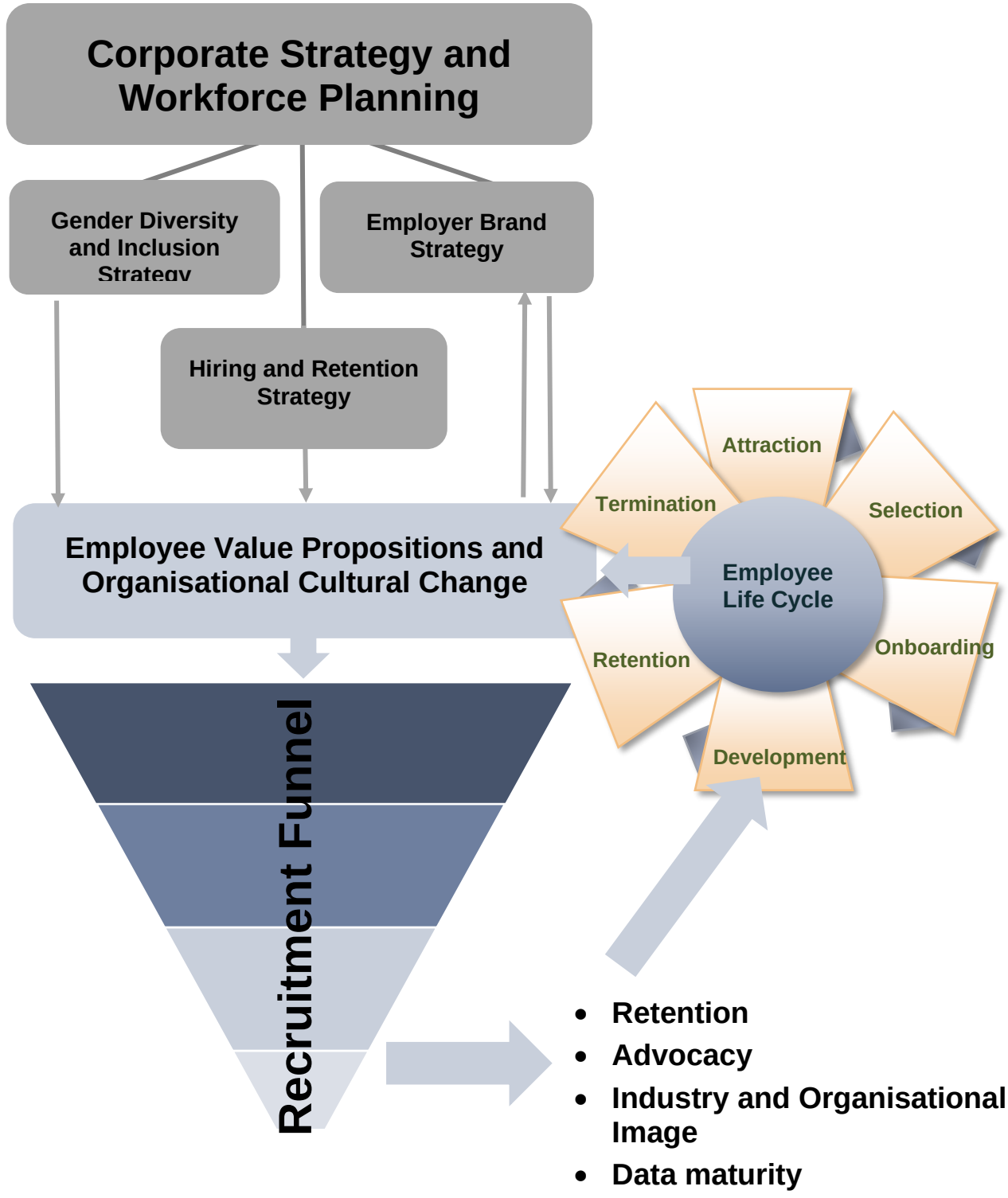
Preamble for the ‘Looking In’ standard

The ‘Looking In’ standard recognises the need for new approaches to growing the participation and retention of women workers in the building and construction industry. Implementing a gender diversity and inclusion strategy will enable organisations to understand how their company culture and systems may impact work outcomes for women workers. The gender diversity and inclusion strategy should provide a company road map for change.

Standard Three The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy.	
Suggested activities / tools	**Tick if complete**
The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy that details: • Company goals for achieve gender diversity and inclusion • How the business will increase participation and retention of women workers • Policies and supporting procedures • Company training requirements to develop gender diversity and inclusion capabilities • Implementation plan and timetable • Evaluation, metrics, and reporting plan	
An aligned, company-wide systems infrastructure (technology, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices) underpinned by a continuous improvement and business excellence mindset supports the strategy.	
Resources such as the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) documents and tools listed below have informed the gender diversity and inclusion strategic development and planning process: • WGEA - Gender strategy toolkit • WGEA - Gender strategy guide • WGEA - Gender strategy diagnostic tool	
The organisation has self-assessed where it falls on the gender diversity and inclusion continuum. (Note: An example of a gender equity road map can be found in the WGEA gender strategy toolkit document).	

Organisational leaders publicly champion a gender diverse and inclusive culture and challenge the company to move towards the highest levels of the gender diversity and inclusion continuum.	
Organisational leaders have the necessary competencies to alter the status quo in organisational thinking and behaviours.	
Business managers and human resources personnel have developed knowledge and capabilities in gender analysis.	
The organisation has engaged with women workers to understand their lived experiences in the company and to engage them in the development of the gender diversity and inclusion strategy.	
The organisation has engaged with all staff, contractors, and the supply chain to surface ideas for improving gender diversity and inclusion.	
Organisational culture is founded on principles of equality, inclusivity, and mutual respect	
Gender discrimination and unconscious bias issues have been surfaced and acknowledged within the business.	
The organisation has instigated a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate behaviours, including providing mechanisms for: • Empowering employees to 'call out' and report inappropriate behaviours • Enforcing adherence to the zero-tolerance approach at all organisaitonal levels and within the broader supply chain.	
Managers at all levels are trained in conflict resolution and communication techniques.	
Managers model inclusive behaviours.	
The organisation has fostered effective change management skills and change readiness activities to enhance its current and future capacity for change.	
Dedicated diversity champion or champions have been appointed to implement and oversee the strategy.	
As part of the gender diversity and inclusion strategy, targets for increasing women worker participation across all levels of the business have been defined and actions implemented to achieve those targets	
Continuous improvement activities, accountability mechanisms, evaluation and performance metrics, progress monitoring and Board reporting underpin the strategy.	
Leaders, managers, and site supervisors are held accountable through performance management for gender diversity and inclusion outcomes across the business	

Figure Two: Integration of business strategies and recruitment activities and processes



‘Looking After’ Standards

(Execution and Alignment)

Preamble for the ‘Looking After’ standards

The ‘Looking After’ standards aim to assist organisations to employ from a broader pool of talent, increase the attraction and retention of women workers and improve overall organisational productivity and performance. Highly successful organisations critically review the breadth of employee journeys throughout their business and reflect on the outcomes of those journeys. They understand why their organisational vision and goals attract quality candidates. Successful organisations also provide employment conditions that best nurture and retain talented and skilled workers in their business.

Standard Four: The organisation has a strong employer brand and appropriate employee value propositions (EVP) for all workers in the business (permanent and contractual).	
Suggested activities / tools	**Tick if complete**
A gender inclusive employer brand strategy aligned with organisational strategy, mission and goals has been developed and implemented.	
The organisation has a clear understanding of how its employer brand impacts business performance and competitiveness as well as the attraction, recruitment, and retention of staff.	
An organisational Code of Practice is developed and implemented. The code outlines expectations of organisational behaviour in terms of professionalism, worksite appearance and organisation, organisational image, workforce wellbeing, client and public consideration and safety. For an example of a Code of Considerate Practice refer to the Considerate Constructors Scheme at https://www.ccscheme.org.uk/	
Internal communication, policies, procedures, and performance management KPIs are aligned with the employer brand strategic objectives and the Code of Practice.	
Gender mainstreamed employee value propositions (EVPs) are developed across the business and aligned with the main occupational roles (including operational roles).	
Employee value propositions clearly outline the compensation, benefits, cultural expectations, career progression and development, wellbeing, and work enrichment opportunities that the organisation can provide to employees.	
Employee value propositions are regularly updated.	

The organisation undertakes regular analysis of pay and career progression between men and women within the company and takes steps to rectify gaps.	
The organisation has examined ways to provide flexibility to workers with carer responsibilities.	
Strategies are in place to ensure that if employees are undertaking flexible work it does not hamper their career progression.	
The organisation has implemented training for office and site teams around flexibility and appropriate behaviours towards those working part time.	
The organisation provides onsite amenities that are clean and conducive to the needs of women workers.	
Job enrichment, training and career development is offered to all employees, including those in entry-level operational roles.	
The organisation has developed new activities for attracting and recruiting candidates.	
The organisation's website and promotional collateral are aspirational in nature rather than transactional.	
Promotional materials and recruitment marketing collateral map to the values, influences, motivations, and career goals of targeted candidate groups.	
Employee stories and career pages are accessible and easily found by potential candidates.	
Successful career journeys of existing women workers are showcased.	
The organisation has targeted specific roles, employee levels or business units to increase participation of women workers within the business.	
Specific and targeted training and development programmes are created and implemented to upskill and empower women workers.	
Where specific job openings have been identified, the skills, capabilities and experience required to perform the role/s have been analysed and confirmed and captured in realistic position descriptions.	
All potential and vacant roles (operational and professional) have a formal application process.	
Women workers are encouraged to join internal and external mentoring programmes and networking events.	
Regular career planning discussions are held with employees.	
Managers and workers are held accountable for the actions and tasks on employee career plans.	

The organisation encourages women to practice and display assertive behaviours such as asking for a raise or job enrichment opportunities (such as exposure to more complex projects).	
Standard Five: The organisation has implemented a formal hiring and retention strategy based on modern recruitment methods.	
Suggested activities / tools	**Tick if complete**
People management best practices are valued and prioritised in the organisation	
The organisation has reviewed existing hiring and retention strategies, policies, processes, and outcomes.	
Existing employees, and where possible, previous candidates, have been consulted in terms of their personal experiences with the recruitment process and their ongoing employee journey.	
The organisation has developed and implemented a gender mainstreamed hiring and retention strategy aligned to the elements of the employee life cycle: Attraction, Selection, Onboarding, Development, Retention and Exiting (termination).	
The hiring and retention strategy includes policies, procedures, and guidance in at least the following areas: • Diversity and inclusion principles, policy, and practice • Employee legislation • IR requirements including Enterprise Agreements, Awards and Employment Contracts • Employer branding • Employee value propositions • Recruitment attraction techniques • Workforce planning • Position description development • Interview and feedback techniques • Decision making and recognising unconscious bias • Employee consultation and engagement • Tracking of candidate experience • Performance management • Employee training and career development • Recruitment metrics • Governance, and reporting	

The hiring and retention strategy is regularly reviewed and updated.	
Human resource personnel, business managers, front line managers and other personnel involved in recruitment processes are trained in modern recruitment methods and in surfacing unconscious bias along all key recruitment stages.	
Hiring personnel recognise that unconscious biases and underlying assumptions can affect hiring decisions.	
Current and future business needs have been mapped including project pipelines and workforce skill and competency requirements.	
Career maps and career journeys have been developed for professional and operational roles.	
The organisation has identified the capabilities, skills, attitudes, and experience of professional and operational star performers and utilised this information to inform position descriptions and interview collateral.	
Position descriptions have been revised, updated, or developed for all professional and operational roles.	
All position descriptions: • Are linked to the organisational vision, mission, and goals • Portray realistic capability requirements, skills and aptitudes required for a role • Include meaningful productivity objectives • Outline the performance expectations for the role.	
Interview questions reflect an understanding that candidate capabilities, skills and experience can be transferred from other industries and roles.	

Standard Six: The organisation has implemented effective governance including targets, evaluation criteria, metrics, and reporting mechanisms across all recruitment activities	
Suggested activities / tools	**Tick if complete**
As part of the data maturity plan, the organisation has moved recruitment metrics reporting from a compliance activity to a continuous improvement activity, fully integrated with business systems, culture and business strategy.	
Candidate experience is measured and tracked across all parts of the recruitment process	
Below are suggested hiring and retention strategy metrics:	
<u>Sourcing/Attraction</u> • Applications per job • Application completions • Applications per channel	<u>Recruitment process</u> • Time to screen candidates and CVs • Time to contact

• Breadth and depth of applicants • Hires per channel	• Interview and candidate rates per offer of job • Time to offer, hire, accept, and start • Time to inform unsuccessful outcomes • Acceptance of offer rate	
<u>Business/performance metrics</u> • Cost per hire • Number of employee referrals • Time to productivity • Talent pool growth • Strategic vs urgent hiring rates • Candidate profile vs performance rate • Employee net promoter score • Revenue and profit per employee	<u>Employee experience</u> • Employee satisfaction • Employee satisfaction of women workers • Absenteeism rate • Leave totals (parental, holiday, sickness) • Promotion rates and time from hiring to promotion for women workers • Training sessions per occupational role • Candidate job satisfaction	
<u>Recruitment process satisfaction</u> • Candidate experience • Hiring manager experience	<u>Retention</u> • Total employee retention rate • Retention rate of women workers • Employee turnover – reasons to leave and time to turnover from hiring • Turnover vs age, diversity group, tenure, functional level, manager, and department	

Further reading and resources

Australia

Incolink Women's Recruitment Platform

Workplace Gender Equality Authority (WGEA)
https://www.wgea.gov.au/
Australian Human Rights Commission Gender Equality
https://www.humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12038

Diversity Council Australia
https://www.dca.org.au/
Victorian Government: Recruit Smarter
https://www.vic.gov.au/recruit-smarter
Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI)
https://www.ahri.com.au/resources/diversity-inclusion-resources/
Male Champions of Change
https://malechampionsofchange.com/
Queensland Government Office for Women (Gender Analysis Toolkit)
https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/women/gender-analysis-toolkit

International
World Economic Forum
http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
https://www.oecd.org/gender/
International Labour Organisation (ILO)
https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm

Guidance Notes for the Victorian Building and Construction Industry Recruitment Standards

Medium to Large Business Guidance

Rationale for the Victorian Building and Construction Industry Recruitment Standards (VBCRS)

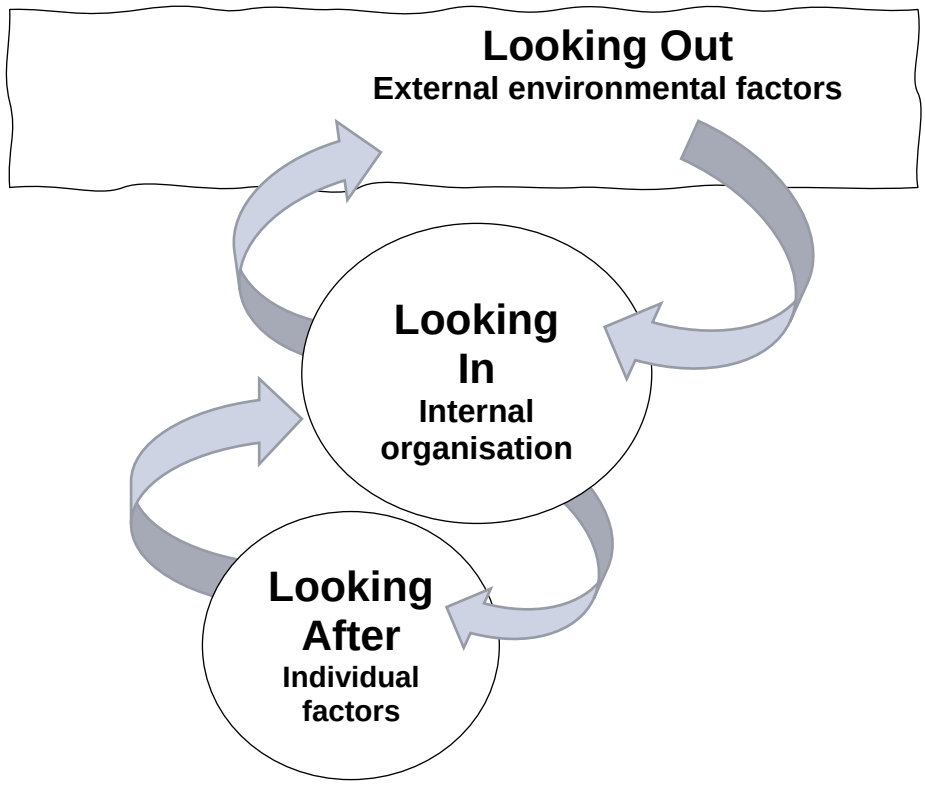
A gender diverse and inclusive building and construction industry will align Victorian businesses with their global counterparts in terms of innovation, customer satisfaction and business competitiveness. To increase the number of skilled women workers at all occupational levels, organisations need to attract and recruit differently. Increasing the participation and retention of women workers requires explicit support from organisational leaders and cultural change at the Industry as well as at the organisational level. The execution of recruitment and retention activities in a strategic context develops purposeful, inclusive behaviours and an environment conducive to industry change.

Summary of the Victorian Building and Construction Recruitment Standards

Looking Out (Analysis)	**Standard One**	The organisation underpins strategic business planning and people capability decisions with ongoing industry and external analyses.
	Standard Two	The organisation holds itself accountable for employing and developing a gender diverse workforce.
Looking In (Formulation)	**Standard Three**	The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy.
Looking After (Execution and Alignment)	**Standard Four**	The organisation has a strong employer brand and appropriate employee value propositions (EVP) for all workers in the business (permanent and contractual).
	Standard Five	The organisation has implemented a formal hiring and retention strategy based on modern recruitment methods.
	Standard Six	The organisation has implemented effective metrics, evaluation criteria and reporting mechanisms across all recruitment activities.

The VBCRS framework consists of three, interrelated levels:

- Looking Out Factors – these focus on strategic management activities and organisational future proofing
- Looking In Factors – these focus on organisational culture, systems infrastructure, and gender mainstreaming activities
- Looking After Factors – these focus on effective attraction, recruitment, and retention strategies



These guidance notes provide checklists of suggested best practice activities and tools for organisations to assist with implementing and maintaining each of the Victorian Building and Construction Recruitment Standards within a gender diverse and inclusive strategic context.

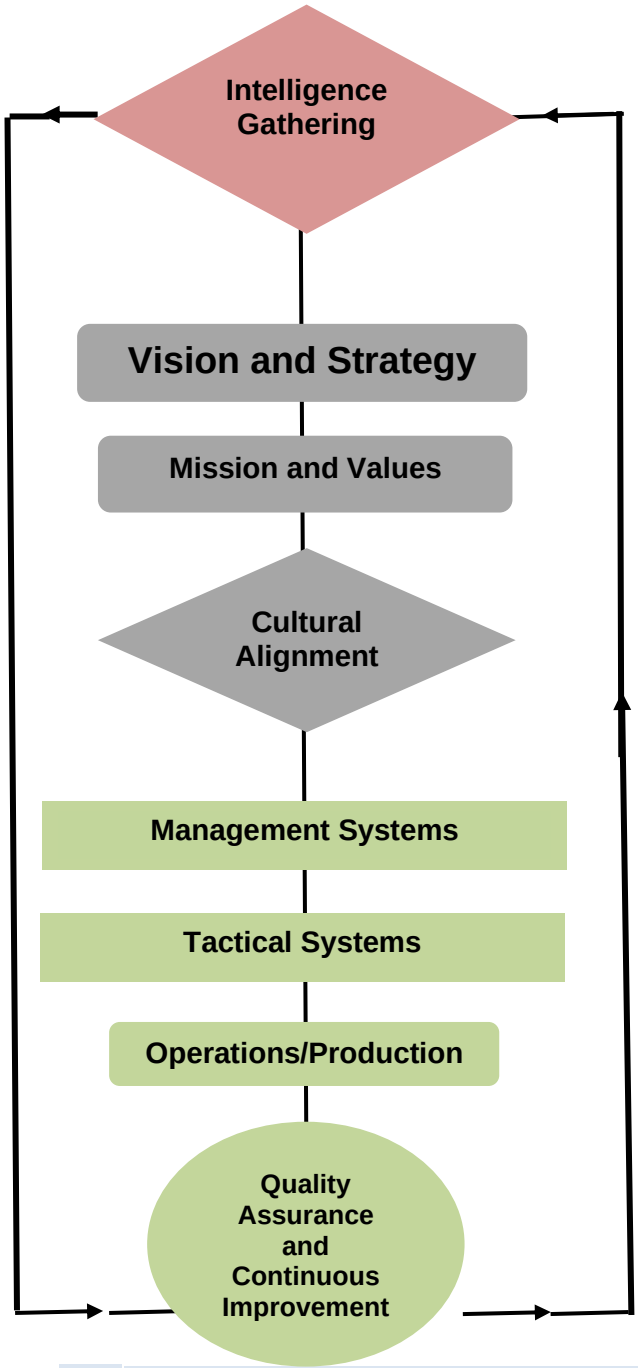
The interactions of environmental, organisational and individual factors outlined in the VCBRS are diagrammatically represented in Figure One and Figure Two in this document:

- Figure One – depicts the relationship between corporate strategy and goals, business intelligence, business systems and operational recruitment activities (page 4).

- Figure Two – illustrates the connection between a formal gender diversity and inclusion strategy, employer branding, recruitment activities and the retention of employees (page 14).

Further reading and resources to assist with developing a gender diversity and inclusion strategy can also be found towards the end of the guidance notes.

Figure One: Implementing a gender diverse and inclusive recruitment strategy within a strategic context.



Looking Out - Analysis

Where are we now?

Activities/Tools

- PESTLE / SWOT analysis
- Scenario thinking
- Competitor analysis e.g. Porters
- Stakeholder analysis
- Industry trends and insights
- Conferences / Seminars
- Workforce trends / skills
- Gender analysis
- Salary and career parity reviews
- Governance and Board reporting

Looking In - Formulation

Where do we want to go?

How will we get there?

Activities/Tools

- Gender diversity and inclusion strategy
- Board and Management unconscious bias and diversity training
- Employer brand development
- Leadership architecture and development
- Attraction/ social media channels
- Content messaging
- Communication plans
- Change management – readiness, leadership commitment and execution
- Workforce planning actions
- Novel outreach programs
- Strategic recruitment targets
- Succession planning

Looking After – Execution and Alignment

How are we doing?

What's next?

Activities/Tools

- Enterprise architecture
- Data management and maturity
- Hiring and retention strategy execution
- Employee value propositions
- Employee journey mapping
- Employee life cycle
- Employee development
- Implicit bias testing and training
- Performance management
- SMARTER KPIs
- Compensation and benefits
- Mentoring programs
- Flexibility arrangements
- Awards / Employee Contracts
- Assertiveness and Resilience Training
- Assertiveness and commercial acumen training
- Reporting and metrics

‘Looking Out’ Standards - Checklist

(Analysis)

Preamble for the ‘Looking Out’ standards

A strategic management mindset improves organisational clarity around long-term business viability and market competitiveness. Therefore, organisations need to be informed and knowledgeable about local and global industry developments as well as political, socioeconomic, and technological trends, in order to attract and hire the most capable workforce. The ‘Looking Out’ standards recognise that business success is impacted as much by external factors as organisational internal practices and employee composition. These standards also recognise that all organisations, in every sector of the industry, are accountable for increasing the number of skilled women workers in the building and construction industry.

Standard One: The organisation underpins strategic business planning and people capability decisions with ongoing industry and external analyses.	
Components	
1.1 Strategic management activities underpin organisational goals, objectives, and strategies 1.2 Environmental scanning research, industry trend analyses and reviews of business threats and opportunities are consistently undertaken 1.3 Knowledge of existing and future industry skill requirements and work patterns inform business capability analyses and hiring decisions 1.4 Strategic workforce planning processes recognise the importance of all employees, and the broader supply chain, to organisational competitive advantage and provision of value to clients 1.5 Integrated data management actions align strategic goals with operational processes	
Suggested activities / tools	**Tick if complete**
Strategy development is informed by activities, insights, and analytical tools such as: • PESTLE, SWOT, Competitor, and data analysis	

• Scenario Planning • Business intelligence and data analytics • Attendance at industry conferences, seminars, and trade fairs • Observations of local and global trends in construction methodologies, technologies, and work patterns.	
Strategies are developed and implemented for all business areas (e.g. operations and business systems (policies and procedures), production and innovation, people and culture, enterprise architecture and technology, customer service, contractor and stakeholder alliances and quality assurance).	
Business/departmental planning both informs and is aligned with strategic planning cycles and workforce capability analyses.	
Strategy development and implementation plans are integrated with all people and culture activities including attraction, recruiting, retention, leadership development, employee development and the employee lifecycle.	
Strategic, business, and operational plans are aligned with SMARTER-orientated (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound, Explainable/Evaluated and Relative/Revised) key performance indicators (KPIs).	
Future skill requirements of the industry and the organisation are regularly analysed and mapped.	
Staff and contractor hiring is informed by existing and future business requirements and potential industry skills gaps and by the organisational gender diversity strategy.	
The organisation has self-assessed against a known data maturity model (for example Gartner or Deloittes data maturity models) and created an action plan to move towards a predictive data framework.	
Data reporting has moved from siloed reporting to full integration across the business.	
The organisation has transitioned from data awareness and capture activities to proactive use of data as insights for strategic decisions.	
Organisational culture supports business intelligence and quality data analytics.	
Workforce capabilities and skills, enterprise architecture and business systems are fully integrated to pursue predictive data maturity.	
The organisational workforce and broader supply chain understands the links between data maturity, organisational goals, client satisfaction, supply chain quality, project success and employee recruitment and retention outcomes.	
Project and client data is regularly collected, analysed, and integrated into strategies, business systems and data repositories.	
Quality assurance, continuous improvement, compliance, data governance and security are an organisational priority.	

Standard Two: The organisation holds itself accountable for employing and developing a gender diverse workforce.	
Components	
2.1 Organisational leaders publicly support and enhance - at the industry and organisational level - gender mainstreaming in the Victorian building and construction industry 2.2 Organisational attraction and recruitment strategies focus on improving the image of the organisation (including gender mainstreaming organisational marketing materials, social media, and work sites) and the broader industry 2.3 Strategic business goals include targets and accountability metrics for increasing the number and availability of skilled women workers 2.4 Organisational collaboration with industry stakeholders to reduce structural barriers that hinder participation of women workers in the building and construction industry is a business priority and includes actions such as: 2.4.1 Developing, implementing, or participating in industry and organisational outreach programs that focus on attracting and recruiting women 2.4.2 Assisting with provision of grants, scholarships, incentives, work placements and other ongoing opportunities to increase the recruitment and retention of women 2.4.3 Formalising existing career journeys and creating future careers, pathways and options that appeal to potential women workers at the operational and professional occupational levels 2.4.4 Actively contributing to industry conferences, seminars, portals and repositories around gender inclusivity best practice and successful recruitment strategies	
Suggested activities / tools	**Tick if complete**
The organisation has assigned an annual budget (monetary, time or in-kind) to support industry-led activities that improve the industry's image.	
The organisation actively collaborates with and supports government, industry associations and other industry stakeholders to increase the number of skilled women construction workers including the development of: • improved leadership in future proofing the industry in terms of new ideas, technologies, management techniques and talent management • aspirational advertising for national platforms (like the aspirational defence force advertisements) such as TV, radio, and other media forms, • novel outreach activities that challenge prevailing societal views of the construction industry	

• a forward-thinking industry image that offers rewarding, diverse and challenging careers to a diverse workforce.	
The organisation undertakes ongoing gender mainstreaming audits and reviews of branding and image materials such as the company website, client marketing materials, social media platforms, graduate and other staff training materials in order to normalise the likelihood of seeing women workers in all occupations and roles within the industry broadly and the company specifically.	
The strategic importance (namely, business competitiveness and sustainability) of gender diversity and inclusion initiatives are explained and communicated throughout the organisation.	
The organisation has committed to grassroots and vertical increase of women workers.	
The organisation has developed targets (short term and aspirational), strategies and implementation plans to significantly grow participation and retention of women workers within the business.	
The targets for increasing participation and retention of women workers are holistically aligned with organisational goals, leadership accountability, culture, and systems.	
Women worker participation and retention targets are identified across all people and culture areas including diversity and inclusion, communication, attraction, application, interviewing panels, recruitment, selection, retention, training and development, mentoring, peer support, promotion, pay equity and quality project/work exposure.	
The organisation has developed targets and plans for increasing representation by women at board and senior leadership level, with appropriate training and mentoring as a supportive mechanism.	
The organisation has an incentivised prospective women worker referral programme in place.	
Skills and capability gaps are met by recruiting externally as well as promoting and developing personnel internally rather than poaching talent.	
The organisation develops new jobs and roles that target and attract prospective women workers. Specific organisational programmes, roles and recruitment rounds are targeted towards women including apprenticeships and graduate places.	

The organisation works with stakeholders including schools, training institutions, GTOs, industry associations and universities to develop programs, cadetships and graduate courses in areas of new technologies such as 3D modelling and drones as well as skill gap areas such as building inspectors, to specifically attract and encourage prospective women workers.	
The organisation has broadened the depth and breadth of the outreach and attraction mechanisms it normally utilises, to attract and recruit skilled women workers.	
External recruitment agencies engaged by the organisation are held accountable for growing the number of women interviewed, selected, onboarded, and retained in the company.	
The organisation recognises that it may need to offer additional training and development to women workers to ensure that have equal access to roles and opportunities within the organisation.	
Organisational leaders acknowledge there is a gender inequity issue in the construction industry and commit to being part of the process to create change.	
Organisational leaders undertake training to explore their personal unconscious biases and improve their understanding of diversity and inclusion principles.	
Organisational leaders persistently raise and discuss gender diversity and inclusion issues at industry and organisational levels.	
Organisational leaders challenge their organisations to improve the overall attraction and retention of skilled women workers within the company.	
Organisational leaders publicly support industry awards and competitions that recognise and celebrate effective gender diversity and inclusion programs and outcomes in construction organisations.	
Organisational leaders recognise that growth needs to occur across the full gamut of opportunities and roles that construction can offer (not just operational and trades roles).	
Organisational leaders constructively add to discussions around structural barriers to women worker participation and retention in the industry (including legal instruments) that are inconsistent with modern working patterns and conditions, future ways of operating and gender inclusive cultures.	
A strategy and budget is assigned to organisational outreach activities that showcase the diversity of construction career opportunities to prospective women workers.	

New outreach activities are piloted and evaluated such as: • Women-only Open Days • Women role models visiting local sports, scout and girl guiding groups • Visiting and mentoring school and tertiary students • Offering Career Transitioning and Carers Return to Work programmes • STEM school engagement programmes as part of major construction projects such as the Crossrail Learning Legacy Programme **https://learninglegacy.crossrail.co.uk/documents/young-crossrail-programme/** • Charity endeavours where participants learn entry level construction skills similar to 'Volunteer it Yourself' **https://volunteerityourself.org/** • Competitions like the Gruen Transfer to create a marketing video encouraging women into construction	
The organisation proactively showcases the career pathways of existing women workers within its business.	
The organisation has raised the value and prestige of operational work and mapped clear pathways to successful careers within the organisation starting from entry-level operational roles.	
The organisation has mapped all other career journeys within its business from entry-level and clearly outlined how these career journeys are supported with mentoring, training, and development at each stage.	
The organisation has updated worksites, PPE, company websites, marketing materials and social media platforms to make them more appealing to existing and potential women workers.	
The organisation collaborates with other industry stakeholders to brainstorm and create new roles that are not entrenched with existing cultural mores.	
Organisational leaders collaborate with industry stakeholders to ensure VET and University level construction programs include gender diversity and inclusion principles as well as commercial and financial literacy as part of the core units.	
The organisation collaborates with industry stakeholders to develop standardised gender metric compliance forms for all new projects.	
The organisation actively shares best practice outcomes around recruitment and retention successes of women workers with other industry stakeholders.	

‘Looking In’ Standard - Checklist

(Formulation)

Preamble for the ‘Looking In’ standard

The ‘Looking In’ standard recognises the need for innovative and transformational approaches to grow the participation and retention of women workers in the building and construction industry. A comprehensive gender diversity and inclusion strategy will enable organisations to understand how organisational systems impact on the lived experiences of women workers as well as analyse the structural barriers to their attraction, advancement, and retention. Providing a road map for change, the gender diversity and inclusion strategy needs to be aligned with organisational goals and strategies, championed by organisational leaders, and incorporate key performance indicators KPI’s that hold all staff accountable for progress and success.

Standard Three The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy.
Components
3.1 The gender diversity and inclusion strategy is aligned with organisational strategic management activities
3.2 The gender diversity and inclusion strategy is funded sufficiently
3.3 An aligned, company-wide systems infrastructure (technology, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices) underpinned by a continuous improvement and business excellence mindset supports the strategy
3.4 Organisational leaders are publicly committed to gender diversity and inclusion and have the necessary competencies to alter the status quo in organisational thinking and behaviours
3.5 The organisation has fostered effective change management skills and competencies to enable the organisation to adapt to the changing internal workplace environment
3.6 Organisational culture is founded on principles of equality, inclusivity, and mutual respect
3.7 Gender violence, harassment and discrimination workplace training programs are implemented and mandatory across all organisational occupational levels

3.8 The organisation has prioritised and implemented targeted actions to increase the attraction, recruitment, and retention of women into trades and semi-skilled roles

3.9 The organisation had prioritised meaningful career development and progression of existing women workers who are labourers, cleaners, traffic controllers or working in other ancillary operational positions

3.10 Targets have been developed for increasing the participation of women professional workers and actions implemented to achieve those targets

3.11 Suppliers and clients are conversant, accountable, and aligned with the organisation's gender diversity and inclusion strategy, policies, and practices

3.12 The organisation prioritises selecting and contracting sub-contractors and suppliers who have demonstrable gender equality practices and outcomes within their own businesses

3.13 Continuous improvement activities, accountability mechanisms, evaluation and performance metrics, progress monitoring and Board reporting underpin the gender diversity and inclusion strategy

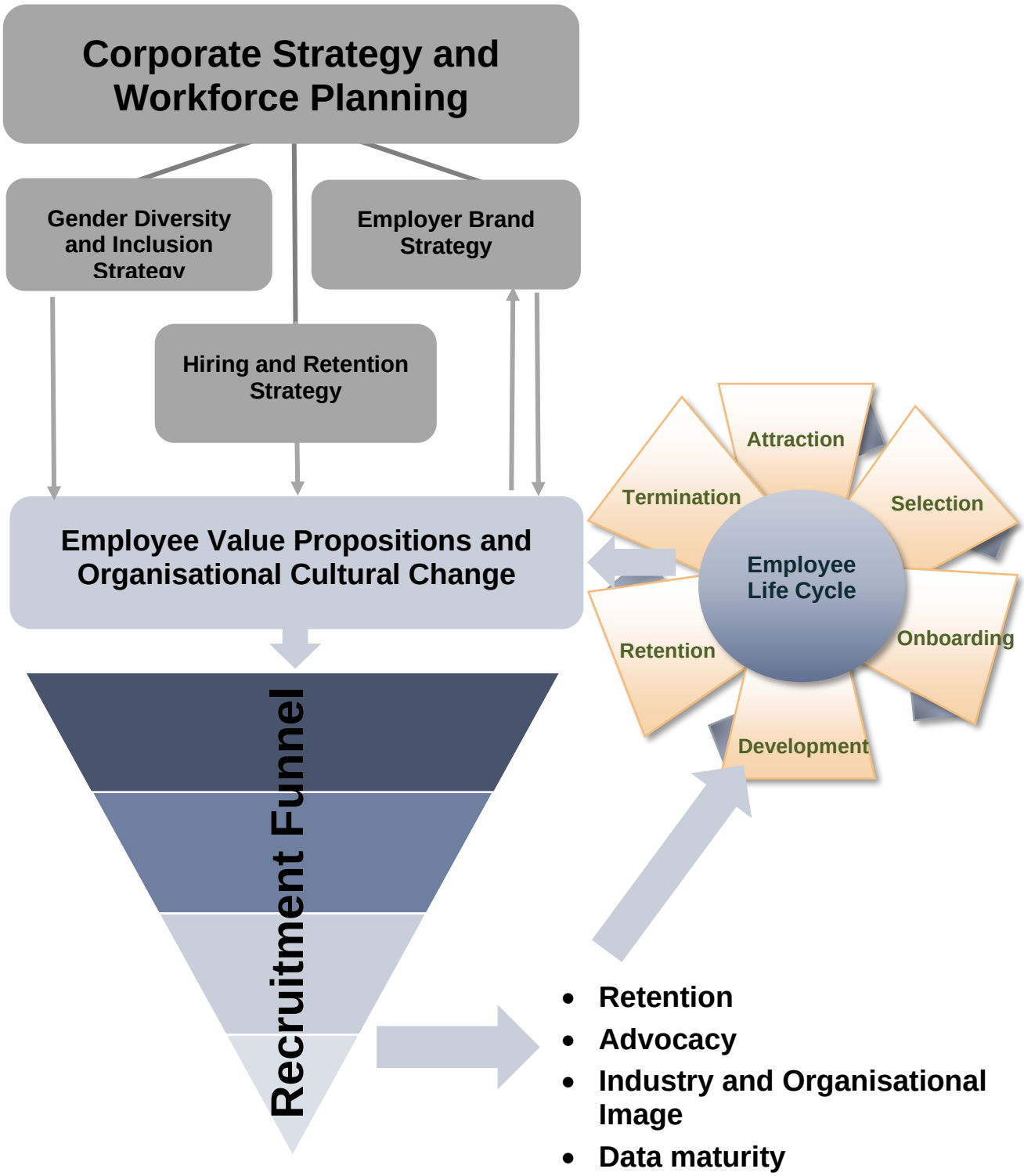
Actions and/or Tools	**Tick if complete**
The organisation recognises the correlation between lack of prospective women candidates (at all levels in the industry) and entrenched organisational perceptions of the physical capabilities of women, male career models and gendered culture, values, and behaviours.	
The organisation has developed and implemented a gender diversity and inclusion strategy that includes at least the following components from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Gender Strategy Guide: • Company goals for achieving gender diversity and inclusion • Business case for gender diversity and inclusion • Goals, objective, and actions for increasing participation and retention of women workers • Systems infrastructure and alignment with organisational strategies, procedures, policies, and functions (Policies and supporting procedures) • Company training requirements to develop gender diversity and inclusion capabilities • Committed and trained leadership • Implementation and communication plan • Evaluation, metrics, and reporting plan.	
The gender diversity and inclusion strategy is supported by an appropriate budget.	

Resources such as the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) documents and tools listed below informed the gender diversity and inclusion strategic development and planning process: • WGEA - Gender strategy toolkit • WGEA - Gender strategy guide • WGEA - Gender strategy diagnostic tool	
Business managers and human resources personnel have developed knowledge and capabilities in gender analysis.	
The following components (from the WGEA gender strategy diagnostic tool) informed the gender analysis process: • Level of stakeholder engagement - (e.g. Board members, CEO, Executive team, management, HR team, clients, suppliers, employees, and industry stakeholders), • Degree of leadership accountability • Breadth of organisational strategy • Quality of gender measurement and reporting processes • Alignment of organisational policies and processes • Informed and committed supply chain • Knowledge of gender composition • Knowledge of gender pay equity • Policies and lived experiences around flexibility • Talent attraction, pipeline, and career development • Leader and manager capability • Gender inclusive culture • Recruitment and selection outcomes	
The organisation has self-assessed where it falls on the gender diversity and inclusion continuum. (Note: An example of a gender equity road map can be found in the WGEA gender strategy toolkit document).	
The organisation has engaged with women workers to understand their lived experiences in the company and to engage them in the development of the gender diversity and inclusion strategy.	
Organisational leaders publicly champion a gender diverse and inclusive culture and challenge the company to move towards the highest levels of the gender diversity and inclusion continuum.	
The organisation has engaged with all staff, contractors, and the supply chain to surface ideas for improving gender diversity and inclusion.	

Gender discrimination and unconscious bias issues have been surfaced and acknowledged within the business using tools such as Harvard Implicit Association Testing.	
Gender diversity and inclusion training has been implemented and attended by the Board, senior leadership, supervisors, staff, supply chain and contractors.	
A leadership development architecture incorporating gender diversity and inclusion, organisational leadership, and personal leadership competencies across all levels of the business has been developed and implemented.	
Managers at all levels are trained in conflict resolution and communication techniques.	
Managers model inclusive behaviours.	
The organisation has instigated a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate behaviours, including providing mechanisms for: • Empowering employees to 'call out' and report inappropriate behaviours • Enforcing adherence to the zero-tolerance approach at all organisational levels and within the broader supply chain.	
The organisation has enhanced its current and future capacity for change.	
The organisation has developed and implemented a structured and purposeful change strategy to improve gender diversity and inclusion in the business: • The organisation has been well-prepared in readiness for change • Change impact assessments have been performed • Senior leaders understand the need for change and are motivated towards change success • Key stakeholders, leaders and staff have been engaged with and informed as part of the change process • Dedicated diversity champions have been appointed to implement and oversee the strategy • Change management activities have been tested in smaller initiatives and pilots before rolling out across the business • A well-develop action plan supports the change process and is regularly assessed and updated • Performance management KPIs underpin change outcomes • The effectiveness of the change program is assessed and evaluated	
Leaders, managers, and site supervisors are held accountable through performance management for gender diversity and inclusion outcomes across the business.	
The organisation has developed the ability to pivot around new ideas, opportunities, abilities, and ways of thinking.	

The organisation has committed to ongoing and reasonable organisational targets in terms of women worker participation and retention and engaged all staff in the business to find ways to achieve those targets.	
The organisation has analysed reasons why women workers are not advancing to senior management or Board roles within the business and implemented actions to mitigate this issue.	
The broader supply chain has been engaged to brainstorm and discuss ways to attract, recruit and retain women workers in the industry.	
Gender targets are formalised for specific recruitment activities such as the number of applicants who are women, how many CV's from women are screened, inclusion of women on interview panels, and numbers of women promoted, and retained in the business.	
Leaders, managers, site supervisors and staff are held accountable through performance management for gender diversity and inclusion outcomes across the business.	

Figure Two: Integration of business strategies and recruitment activities and processes



‘Looking After’ Standards (Individual Level)

Preamble for the ‘Looking After’ standards

The ‘Looking After’ standards aim to assist organisations to employ from a broader pool of talent, increase the attraction and retention of women workers and improve overall organisational productivity and performance. Highly successful organisations critically review the breadth of employee journeys throughout their business and reflect on the outcomes of those journeys. They understand why their organisational vision and goals attract quality candidates. Successful organisations also provide employment conditions that best nurture and retain talented and skilled workers in their business.

Standard Four: The organisation has a strong employer brand and appropriate employee value propositions (EVP) for all workers in the business (permanent and contractual).
Components
4.1 A gender inclusive employer brand attracts women to consider working in the building and construction industry
4.2 Gender inclusive employee value propositions appeal to potential women workers and support the retention of existing workers
4.3 Employee value propositions include at least the following components: Remuneration (pay parity), benefits and rewards, career development (technical and leadership training, mentoring, networking, coaching, career guidance, other work placements or quality project opportunities), working conditions (amenities, flexibility and carers leave, teams, recognition) and culture
4.4 Employee value propositions are segmented for different roles and levels
4.5 Proactive and innovative recruitment marketing approaches are employed to attract as diverse a candidate pool as possible for all roles in the organisation
4.6 Specific training plans and learning programs are developed for all women employees that include technical and skills training as well as employability, financial acumen, communication, and assertiveness skills instruction
4.7 Enrichment training and supervision programs are developed and implemented to assist women workers with limited site experience to rapidly advance their onsite knowledge and experience

4.8 The organisation provides appropriate gender-separated amenities onsite, at all times, for all projects	
Suggested activities / tools	**Tick if complete**
A gender inclusive employer brand strategy, aligned with organisational strategy, mission and goals has been developed and implemented.	
The organisation has a clear understanding of how its employer brand impacts business performance and competitiveness as well as the attraction, recruitment, and retention of staff.	
The organisation utilises empathy mapping and design thinking principles to understand the values, influences, motivations, and career goals of targeted groups of prospective women workers and what would attract them to work for the organisation.	
Content marketing and communication strategies are developed to reach those targeted groups including through online communication, websites, social media, marketing materials, training materials and outreach activities.	
Evaluation and progress criteria are established to report on the success of the employer brand strategy.	
An organisational Code of Practice is developed and implemented. The code outlines expectations of organisational behaviour in terms of professionalism, worksite appearance and organisation, organisational image, workforce wellbeing, client and public consideration and safety. For an example of a Code of Considerate Practice refer to the Considerate Constructors Scheme at https://www.ccscheme.org.uk/	
Internal communication, policies, procedures, and performance management KPIs are aligned with the employer brand strategic objectives and the Code of Practice.	
Gender mainstreamed employee value propositions (EVPs) are developed across the business and aligned with the main occupational roles (including operational roles).	
Employee value propositions clearly outline the compensation, benefits, cultural expectations, career progression and development, wellbeing, and work enrichment opportunities that the organisation can provide to employees.	
Gender mainstreamed employee value propositions are easily found by prospective candidates.	
Employees have been consulted as part of the employee value proposition creation process and engaged in the content and implementation.	
Employee value propositions are regularly updated.	
The organisation undertakes regular analysis of pay and career progression between men and women within the company and undertaken steps to rectify gaps.	

The organisation has examined ways to provide flexibility to workers with carer responsibilities.	
Strategies are in place to ensure that flexible work does not hamper career progression.	
The organisation has implemented training for office and site teams around flexibility and appropriate behaviours towards those working part time.	
The organisation commits to ongoing people and culture training for managerial staff to improve managerial understanding of the links between employee well-being, retention, and productivity.	
The organisation provides onsite amenities that are clean and conducive to the needs of women workers.	
Networking, coaching, and performance management are business activities regularly provided or performed across all occupational levels of the business.	
The capability of senior women to champion and support professional and operational women workers has been developed.	
Job enrichment, training and career development is offered to all employees, including those in entry-level operational roles.	
The organisation has developed and implemented a recruitment marketing strategy.	
Frameworks such as the 'recruitment attraction funnel' underpin the recruitment marketing strategy as well as the channels and approaches the organisation utilises to reach targeted groups.	
The organisation consistently looks for new ways to raise awareness of the company (and industry) in order to increase its access to a broader pool of candidates.	
The organisation's website and promotional collateral are aspirational in nature rather than transactional.	
Promotional materials and recruitment marketing collateral map to the values, influences, motivations, and career goals of targeted candidate groups.	
Employee stories and career pages are accessible and easily found.	
Successful career journeys of existing women workers are showcased.	
All vacant roles (operational and professional) have a formal application process.	
Organisational business systems, leadership and culture support the recruitment marketing strategy.	
The recruitment marketing strategy is measured and improvements to recruitment marketing processes are implemented.	

Candidate experience throughout all aspects of the recruitment marketing process is measured and quickly improved where gaps are identified.	
Candidate CVs captured through the recruitment marketing process are archived and regularly reviewed as a source of possible talent for other positions and roles.	
The organisation has targeted specific roles, employee levels or business units to increase participation of women workers within the business.	
Where specific job openings have been identified, the skills, capabilities and experience required to perform the role/s have been analysed and confirmed and captured in realistic position descriptions.	
Where the organisation is hiring multiple groups of cohorts such as apprentices, graduates, or labourers, across the course of a year, ways to attract and hire a cohort of prospective women workers have been investigated.	
Business systems, managerial expertise and culture support this affirmative action recruitment strategy.	
Specific and targeted training and development programmes are developed and implemented to upskill and empower women workers in areas such as assertiveness, commercial acumen, and career planning.	
Women workers are encouraged to join internal and external mentoring programmes, support groups and networking events.	
Regular career planning discussions are held with employees.	
Managers and workers are held accountable for the actions and tasks on employee career plans.	

Standard Five: The organisation has implemented a formal hiring and retention strategy based on modern recruitment methods.

Components

5.1 Human Resource and people management best practices are valued and prioritised in the organisation

5.2 Managers and personnel involved in recruiting processes are trained in modern recruitment methods, gender inclusive principles and performance management

5.3 A gender mainstreamed and formalised hiring and retention strategy (incorporating policies, procedures, templates, matrices, and guidance material) has been implemented

5.4 The hiring and retention strategy reflects the employee lifecycle of workers and is aligned with the gender diversity and inclusion strategy as well as organisational goals, objectives, strategies, and policies

5.5 Continuous capability analyses are performed as part of the strategic workforce planning process

5.6 Realistic and meaningful position descriptions are developed and revised for all professional and operational roles 5.7 Managers at all levels are trained in conflict resolution, communication techniques and in surfacing unconscious bias and underlying assumptions

Actions/Tools	**Tick if complete**
People management best practices are valued and prioritised in the organisation.	
The organisation has reviewed existing hiring and retention strategies, policies, processes, and outcomes.	
Existing employees, and where possible, previous candidates, have been consulted in terms of their personal experiences with the recruitment process and their ongoing employee journey.	
Human resource personnel, business managers, front line managers and other personnel involved in recruitment processes are trained in modern recruitment methods.	
Hiring personnel recognise that unconscious biases can affect hiring decisions and impact the retention of women workers. HR personnel and/or managers involved in recruitment have undergone training in surfacing unconscious bias along all key recruitment stages.	
The organisation has developed and implemented a gender mainstreamed hiring and retention strategy aligned to the following elements of the employee life cycle: Attraction, Selection, Onboarding, Development, Retention and Exiting (termination).	

The hiring and retention strategy includes policies, procedures, and guidance in at least the following areas: • Diversity and inclusion principles, policy, and practice • Employee legislation • IR requirements including Enterprise Agreements, Awards and Employment Contracts • Employer branding • Employee value propositions • Recruitment marketing techniques • Recruitment touchpoints and the employee life cycle • Pipeline and workforce planning • Capability analysis (realistic experience and performance requirements for roles) and position description development • Interview and feedback techniques • Decision making and recognising unconscious bias • Employee consultation • Tracking of candidate experience • Performance management • Employee development • Employee engagement • HR technology (where appropriate) • Recruitment metrics • Governance, and reporting	
The hiring and retention strategy is regularly reviewed and updated.	
Current and future business needs have been mapped including project pipelines and workforce skill and competency requirements.	
Career maps and career journeys have been developed for professional and operational roles.	
The organisation has identified the capabilities, skills, attitudes, and experience of professional and operational star performers and utilised this information to inform position descriptions and interview collateral.	
Position descriptions have been revised, updated, or developed for all professional and operational roles.	
All position descriptions: • Are linked to the organisational vision, mission, and goals • Portray realistic capability requirements, skills and aptitudes required for a role • Include meaningful productivity objectives • Outline the performance expectations for the role.	

Interview questions reflect an understanding that candidate capabilities, skills and experience can be transferred from other industries and roles.		
Standard Six: The organisation has implemented effective governance including targets, evaluation criteria, metrics, and reporting mechanisms across all recruitment activities.		
Actions/Tools		**Tick if complete**
As part of the data maturity plan, the organisation has moved recruitment metrics reporting from a compliance activity to a continuous improvement activity, fully integrated with business systems, culture and business strategy.		
Candidate experience is measured and tracked across all parts of the recruitment process and the employee life cycle.		
Below are suggested hiring and retention strategy metrics:		
<u>Sourcing/Attraction</u> • Recruitment funnel effectiveness • Sourcing channel effectiveness • Breadth and depth of applicants • Advertisement or recruiter performance • Applications per job • Application completions • Applications per channel • Hires per channel	<u>Recruitment process</u> • Time to screen candidates, • Time to screen CVs • Time to contact • Interview rates per offer of job • Time to offer • Time to hire • Time to accept • Time to start • Time to inform outcomes • Submission to acceptance rate • Candidates per hire	
<u>Business/performance metrics</u> • Cost per hire • Number of employee referrals • Time to productivity • Talent pool growth • Strategic vs urgent hiring rates • Candidate profile vs performance rate • Employee net promoter score • Revenue per employee • Profit per employee	<u>Employee experience</u> • Employee satisfaction • Employee satisfaction of women workers • Absenteeism rate • Leave totals (parental, holiday, sickness) • Promotion rates and time from hiring to promotion for women workers • Training sessions per occupational role • Candidate job satisfaction	

Recruitment process satisfaction • Candidate experience • Hiring manager experience	Retention • Total employee retention rate • Retention rate of women workers • Employee turnover – reasons to leave and time to turnover from hiring • Voluntary vs involuntary turnover rate • Retention rate per manager • Turnover vs business profits, age, diversity group, functional level, department, locations, tenure, performance level, business profits	

Further reading and resources

Australia

Incolink Women's Recruitment Platform

Workplace Gender Equality Authority (WGEA)
https://www.wgea.gov.au/

Australian Human Rights Commission Gender Equality
https://www.humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12038

Diversity Council Australia
https://www.dca.org.au/

Victorian Government: Recruit Smarter
https://www.vic.gov.au/recruit-smarter

Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI)
https://www.ahri.com.au/resources/diversity-inclusion-resources/

Male Champions of Change
https://malechampionsofchange.com/

Queensland Government Office for Women (Gender Analysis Toolkit)
https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/women/gender-analysis-toolkit

International

World Economic Forum
http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
https://www.oecd.org/gender/

International Labour Organisation (ILO)
https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm

Appendix C:

DRAFT Building Equality - Code of Respect for Women

BICC
Building Industry Consultative Council

VICTORIA State Government

Victorian Construction Industry Code of Respect

The Foundation for an Inclusive Industry

A positive work environment is one where everyone feels appreciated, respected, and valued, and where everyone has a right to a workplace free from bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination

- The Construction Industry Respect Code ('Respect Code') is a voluntary, industry-led initiative that has been developed by the Building Industry Consultative Council (BICC) which includes leaders from employer associations, unions, major construction companies and Victorian government.
- This Respect Code is modelled on the provisions of Enterprise Agreements in the building and construction industry which have now included a Safe and Respectful Workplaces provisions (include the provision as an Attachment).
- The Respect Code supports making this industry a better place to work for women.

Respect is the fundamental right of every woman in the building industry

- It lets women know they are valued for their abilities, qualities and achievement.
- It also requires the elimination of unacceptable behaviour.
- It means they are included in the team as an equal.

Objectives

This Respect Code aims to:

- ensure every person understands their legal obligations under bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination laws
- create lasting behaviour change by helping people feel confident about creating and maintaining respectful workplaces
- to demonstrate to women that this industry values their involvement.

Principles

- Implementing this Respect Code will assist in creating respectful workplaces for women where safety, inclusiveness and wellbeing are paramount.
- This Respect Code has been developed in collaboration with industry stakeholders and importantly it has been guided and informed by the views of women who work in this industry.

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Responsibilities

Everyone

Everyone is responsible for ensuring their actions and behaviours reflect the principles in this Respect Code.

- Every person is responsible for always:
  - ensuring everyone is treated equally
  - treating each other with consideration and respect
  - being open-minded, inclusive, promoting teamwork
  - valuing other and accepting their differences
  - considering the impact of our behaviours on the women with whom we work
  - calling out behaviour that could lead to bullying, sexual harassment or discrimination
  - acknowledging that our own behaviours and attitudes contribute to a respectful work environment.

Employers

Must have a Respect Code in the workplace.

- Every employer:
- has legal responsibility across all stages of employment:
- must have policies and processes in place to ensure they are meeting their legal obligations under bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination laws,
- is required to ensure women's rights are respected across all stages of employment, including recruitment, career training and progression. Before, during and after parental leave and carer's leave,
- must have a bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination training program to educate all employees on their legal obligations and rights at work. The training may range from worksite inductions to specific training for leaders and representatives.

Project Managers

Must set the example and standards for everyone to follow

- Every manager on a project:
- must set clear expectations of respectful behaviour and respond to ideas, concerns, complaints and feedback with fairness and respect.
- must ensure this Respect Code is explained to everyone working on each project and include information about the Code in site inductions.
- must facilitate the nomination of at least one person on each project as a Contact Officer to provide information and support to workers.

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Disrespectful, unacceptable, illegal and inappropriate behaviours

The following behaviours will not be tolerated in the industry

Bullying

Bullying is when a person or a group of people repeatedly acts unreasonably towards a worker or a group of workers

Bullying can include:

- verbal abuse – spoken insults to, or about someone
- physical abuse –physically harming or threatening to harm someone
- written abuse – notes, emails or posts on social media.
- Insulting or abusive grafitti

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual behaviour that causes a person to feel offended, humiliated or intimidated,.

Sexual harassment includes:

- an unwelcome sexual advance
- an unwelcome request for sexual favours
- any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written. Examples include:

- comments about someone's private life or the way they look
- sexually suggestive behaviour, such as leering or staring
- brushing up against someone, touching, fondling or hugging
- sexually suggestive comments or jokes
- displaying offensive images or objects
- repeated requests to go out
- requests for sex
- sexually explicit emails, text messages or posts on social media
- sexual assault
- suggestive behaviour

Sexual Discrimination

Sexual Discrimination is when women are treated less favourably than men. Sexual Discrimination includes:

- refusal to employ
- deny rights to various forms of leave
- deliberate denial of opportunities to advance
- termination because of gender

Women from culturally diverse backgrounds

Women, from culturally diverse communities may experience compounded discrimination, disrespect and harassment on two grounds, gender and culture.

For this reason, this Respect Code references respectful behaviours beyond gender.

There are many activities and actions available to promote and ensure equity for women from all backgrounds.

Making a complaint

Complaints will be taken seriously

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Any person reporting or making a complaint of bullying, sexual harassment or discrimination to Project Management can expect:	– the report or complaint to be treated seriously and any allegation to be treated with confidentiality; – access to policies and processes relating to complaints management, investigation and responses to any allegations; – support from Project Management; – any formal investigation to be conducted according to the relevant company processes/procedures.

If a matter is the subject of a formal investigation, at the end of an investigation, the person making the complaint should be advised of what action (if any) the Project Management proposes to take.

Additional Advice

- Project based Contact Officer(s) are to be available for anyone who needs advice or assistance. They will be trained appropriately in relevant legislation, including matters of privacy.
- Complaints of bullying, sexual harassment or discrimination by a person or a group of people from the same company must be made through the Employer.
- Complaints of bullying, sexual harassment or discrimination by a person or a group of people from another company on site may be made through either the employee's own company or through Project Management.
- Information about how to make a complaint will be made available through:
- the relevant Enterprise Bargaining Agreement or individual employment contract; and/or
- the company's policies, processes and systems.
- If an allegation involves assault or threats of assault, acts of violence, sexual assault, damage to property or stalking, a person or a group of people affected may contact Victoria Police.

Gender Respect and OH&S

Work-related gendered violence is a serious occupational health and safety issue. (Worksafe)

Power inequalities between women and men can result in Workplace Gendered Violence. Gendered violence is actions and behaviours perpetrated against women because they are women.

It can include any of the following comments and gestures,: • stalking, intimidation or threats • verbal abuse • ostracism or exclusion • sexually explicit gestures • offensive language and imagery • put downs, innuendo, and insinuations • being undermined in your role or position • sexual harassment • sexual assault or rape

Causing harm to women through gendered violence, as described is now regarded as a serious OH&S issue

Employers, employees and others have specific duties relating to work-related gendered violence (including work-related sexual harassment) under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act) and the EO Act.

Under the OHS Act, employers must provide and maintain a work environment that is safe and without risk to the health of their employees, so far as is reasonably practicable

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A very effective way to eliminate the risk of gendered violence is to establish and maintain safe and inclusive workplace cultures and systems, where disrespect and incivility isn't tolerated.

Further information

WorkSafe https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/work-related-gendered-violence-sexual-harassment

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission www.humanrights.vic.gov.au

Workplace Gender Equality Agency WGEA www.wgea.gov.au

Respect Victoria www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au

Carlton Respects https://carltonrespects.com.au

Victorian Government Gender Equality Strategy www.vic.gov.au/our-gender-equality-strategy

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Appendix D:

DRAFT Building Equality Policy (BEP)

Consultation Draft- Building Equality Policy

Context

1. This Building Equality Policy (BEP) seeks to create training and employment opportunities for women through government procurement (e.g. building, infrastructure, civil engineering or other capital works projects) in the context of a COVID-19 economic recovery.

Impact of COVID-19 on women's workforce participation

2. COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on women's workforce participation, employment and economic security, with a significant number of women being displaced. At the same time there is demand for workers in male-dominated industries including construction, transport and logistics that will form part of recovery efforts and experience growth.

3. Women have consistently comprised only 2 percent of field-based workers in the Australian construction sector over the past 30 years. Action is needed to address the gender imbalance in the industry to ensure that women displaced by COVID-19 do not fall even further behind in economic terms relative to men.

4. Key benefits of making male-dominated industries accessible to women include:

   - drawing from a wider talent pool, broadening perspectives and ideas, stimulating innovation, improved staff retention, a better reflection of the consumer base, improved reputation and greater profitability;
   - increased representation of women would assist in addressing the medium to longer term skills gap that the construction industry is facing based on current workforce settings; and
   - addressing occupational segregation, which has been relatively static over the last two decades, with the potential to narrow the gender pay gap and strengthen the economic security for women and their families.

Gender Equality Act 2020 (GE Act)

5. The GE Act requires Victorian public sector organisations, universities and local councils to develop plans and implement measures to promote workplace gender equality, and publicly report on progress against key indicators such as equal pay, recruitment and promotion and workplace gender composition.

6. Organisations may also need to make progress against tailored targets and quotas that may be prescribed on the basis of each industry and sector's baseline positioning, point-in-time analysis and international best practice.

7. The GE Act also provides a platform to influence the private sector through gender-ethical procurement and funding reforms and the development of gender equality industry strategies.

8. While there are strong benefits to engaging women in construction, and other male dominated industries that form part of Victoria's economic recovery, women's

retention longer term will be contingent on supporting workplace gender equality within these industries (for example ensuring they are set up to offer flexible working arrangements, parental leave and offer cultures that support women's progression).

9. Gender ethical procurement is a key lever to achieve this intent.

Women in Construction Strategy

10. The Women in Construction Strategy Work Plan item 4.1 provides for the use of procurement practices to promote gender equality as a point of intervention.

Government Procurement and Industry Participation Policy

11. Victorian Government procurement is one of the largest drivers in the Victorian economy. Collectively, the decisions that organisations make throughout the procurement process have a significant impact on the economy, the environment and the community. Annual infrastructure spending alone will average $9.6 billion from 2017-18 to 2020-21 to deliver the current pipeline of projects.

12. Value for money underpins these procurement decisions, and the Victorian Government recognises environmental, social and economic factors as a core component of value for money.

13. Various procurement and industry participation policies aim to use the Government's purchasing power to deliver broader policy objectives including:

- Social Procurement Framework (SPF), governs how the Government undertakes social procurement. The SPF has seven social and three sustainable objectives that include improving workplace gender equality and promoting women's workforce participation. It applies to departments and agencies procuring goods, services and construction.
- Local Jobs First - Victorian Industry Participation Policy (VIPP), which focuses on providing opportunities for local suppliers to compete for work on all types of government contracts, helping to create and sustain opportunities for Victorian businesses and workers.
- Local Jobs First - Major Projects Skills Guarantee (MPSG), focuses on providing opportunities to Victorian apprentices, trainees and cadets to work on high value government construction projects.
- Tip Truck Policy which requires minimum rates to be paid to owner drivers to improve economic certainty and remove the economic factors for drivers to engage in unsafe practices to secure work.
- It is mandated through whole of government public sector construction procurement, administered by the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF).
- Major Transport Infrastructure Authority (MTIA) projects have a target of 2.5% Aboriginal employment hours as a proportion of total hours, which is mandated through contractual provisions.

Building equality through procurement

14. The BEP introduces supports to address the structural and cultural barriers women face. It seeks to disrupt the existing gender stereotypes, norms and roles in the

construction sector. The following actions could be explored to take advantage of the Building Works stimulus package:

- **Action 1** – require suppliers to meet project gender equality targets;
- **Action 2** - require suppliers to engage women as apprentices, trainees or cadets; and
- **Action 3 –** require suppliers to implement Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs).

Application

15. The BEP applies to all entities defined as either a public body or a department under Section 3 of the *Financial Management Act 1994*.

16. The BEP must be applied by suppliers on all publicly funded construction projects valued at $20 million or more.

17. The financial thresholds refer to the total budget allocated over the life of the project excluding GST and not the value of individual contracts.

18. The BEP applies to contracts for which tenders which are due to be received on or after 1 January 2022. It has prospective not retrospective application.

19. Principal contractors have a contractual obligation to ensure participants in their supply chains are contributing to the overall targets across the project.

Action 1: Project Gender Equality Targets

20. Require suppliers to meet the following minimum onsite gender equality targets:

    - **trade and non-trade Construction Award covered labour** [1]: women are required to perform at least [target for discussion] of the contract works' total estimated labour hours for each trade position and [target for discussion] for each non-trade Construction Award covered labour position; and

    - **management, specialist and supervisory (staff) positions[2]:** women are required to perform at least [target for discussion] of the contract works' total estimated labour hours for staff positions.

    - Suppliers are encouraged to have stretch targets.

21. Suppliers must provide women with equal access to the diverse roles available onsite. Women must have access to all trade, non-trade and managerial/specialised positions.

[1] People employed to work on a project - building /construction and trade qualified, apprentices, trainees and ancillary workers engaged by the Principal Contractor or sub-contracted to perform work.

[2] People who spend 80 per cent of their time dedicated to a specific project, they should be engaged by the principal contractors or sub-contracted to perform work.

Action 2: Require suppliers to engage women apprentices, trainees or cadets

22. Require suppliers to utilise women who are registered apprentices, trainees or cadets to perform at least [target for discussion] of the contract works' total estimated labour hours to be performed by apprentices, trainees or cadets.

23. This will help build a diverse pipeline of qualified women thereby creating a strong and sustainable construction industry and vocational training culture.

Action 3: Require Gender Equality Action Plans

24. Require suppliers to provide a project specific GEAP when submitting an expression of interest or tender for government funded construction work.

Workplace Gender Equality Indicators

25. To promote consistency with the reporting requirements across the public and private sectors under the GE Act and the Commonwealth *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (WGE Act), the GEAP requirements will broadly align with existing reporting obligations.

26. GEAPs must include the following workplace gender equality indicators:

- **Workplace audit**: undertake a gender workplace audit to assess the state and nature of gender inequality in the workplace. The audit will need to address the specific issues facing women in the construction sector. The results of the audit must be included in the GEAP and the strategies and measures to promote gender equality must be based on the audit's results.
- **Respectful workplaces**: provide respectful workplace training to all workers throughout the subcontracting supply chain. Raise awareness about family violence and leave entitlements. Promote the organisations sexual harassment policy to ensure all workers are aware of their legal obligations and rights.
- **Inclusive and equitable culture**: identify actions to promote diversity of thinking, to challenge the status quo and achieve innovative outcomes. A gender inclusive and equitable workplace culture acknowledges the complementary strengths that women and men bring to an organisation.
- **Flexible and empowering workplace**: implement actions to ensure flexible work practices to strengthen individual and team performance. Flexibility is essential to attract, recruit and retain a gender diverse workforce, allowing women to equally participate and perform when opportunities are made available.
- **Diverse and representative workforce**: identify benchmarks and actions to measure gender diversity and representation. A gender balanced workforce will maximise team and business performance across all levels of an organisation.

Appendix E:

RMIT Research Report – Part 1 Summary Report

School of Property, Construction and Project Management

RMIT UNIVERSITY



Women in Construction: Exploring the Barriers and Supportive Enablers of Wellbeing in the Workplace

VICTORIA State Government

Published by RMIT University

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The authors would especially like to thank all the women who completed the survey and who shared their personal, and sometimes painful, experiences of working in the construction industry. We are most grateful for their time, trust, and their dedicated contribution to the industry's on-going growth.

Some readers may find parts of this report distressing, particularly in Section 6.5 where we report on the interview findings. If the content causes distress please seek out your support network or access Beyond Blue, Headspace, or Lifeline.

This research was commissioned by the Victorian Government as part of the *Victorian Women in Construction Strategy 2019-2022 Building Gender Equality* program.

Part 1: Report Summary

1.1 Women in Construction Strategy

The Victorian Government has developed the state's first *Women in Construction Strategy: Building Gender Equality* (https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-women-construction-strategy#rpl-skip-link) in conjunction with the Building Industry Consultative Council (BICC).

The BICC is a forum for dialogue between Government, employers, industry associations and unions on significant economic and industrial relations issues in the building and construction industry (Victorian Government, 2020).

The focus of the Strategy is on women in trades and semi-skilled roles who currently make up just 1% of trades and technician positions in the construction industry. The Government has invested $500,000 to create a strategy to diversify the male-dominated construction industry. The Strategy is based on three key themes:

- Attract: women need to be aware that construction is an attractive and viable career option.
- Recruit: Women must be proactively recruited and have access to strong career pathways.
- Retain: Workplaces must be inclusive and adaptive to ensure women want to stay.

According to industry stakeholders, the strength of this Strategy lies in its comprehensive Work Plan, which will deliver on a range of tangible positive outcomes which are industry-led and will lay the foundation for lasting change.

This research project responds directly to two points of intervention outlined in the Strategy: women's wellbeing and communities of practice, both of which are outlined under Priority 3: Retain.

Point of Intervention	Action
3.3: Map the wellbeing of women employed in trades and semi-skilled roles in the industry.	Support provided to assist in the rollout of the Resilient Women in Construction project commissioned by the CFMMEU.
3.2: Provide opportunities for women to create communities of practice and share experiences.	Create new (and engage with current) networks, structures and forums for women to come together to discuss their experience of working in trades and semi-skilled roles within the industry.

1.2 Establishing an evidence-base

To date, much of the research on gender inequality in the construction industry has focused on women in professional and management roles. Consequently, there is very limited research on women in trades and semi-skilled roles. According to key industry stakeholders, lack of an evidence-base has acted as a barrier to action for this group of women. This report helps to establish an evidence-base informed by the voices of women in trades and semi-skilled roles, founded on a rigorous and robust research design. Findings outlined in this report enable a move from anecdotal evidence to a strong evidence-base which can be used to inform targeted interventions aimed at improving gender equality in construction.

1.3 Wellbeing

To identify and explore the workplace characteristics and challenges that influence the wellbeing of women in construction, a survey was completed by 168 women working in trades and semi-skilled roles to assess their perception of workplace psychosocial safety climate, civility and respect, supervisor support, work-family conflict, and individual resilience. Interviews were later conducted with 43 women to explore the challenges they faced in greater detail and to understand how these issues informed their wellbeing. The majority of survey participants worked in the commercial sector (63%), with a smaller proportion working in the civil (20%) and domestic (12%) construction sectors.

Our findings confirm that women's experiences in the workplace are varied and nuanced. All the women interviewed expressed passion for the construction industry, regardless of the treatment they had experienced in the workplace. Some women had only ever experienced an extremely positive work environment. Many interviewees acknowledged their appreciation of supportive trades teachers, employers, and co-workers, as reflected in the survey's overall findings. However, a substantial proportion of women (almost one third) had experienced negative incidents, ranging from gender discrimination at one end of the continuum to alleged sexual assault at the other extreme. Our findings bring in to focus that some employers are not meeting their obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* 2004 and *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017* to provide a safe workplace for women.

Of note is that trades and semi-skilled women working in construction have a high level of resilience which is considered essential for surviving in challenging work environments. Workplace hierarchies (referred to as a system in which individuals in an organisation are ranked according to their relative status and authority) served to impact on women's value in the workplace and influenced the treatment they received from their work co-workers. Importantly, this issue of hierarchy brings into focus that the number of women employed in construction should not be used as a success measure for equality. While women may be employed onsite, they may not be accepted, included, or treated well. Our findings highlight the complexity of reporting lines on construction-sites which act as a barrier when women attempt to raise their concerns over incidents of inappropriate behaviour.

Three inter-related themes emerged from the study capturing the critical challenges experienced by a substantial proportion of women in trades and semi-skilled roles in the construction industry:

(i) **Women are outsiders**: our results highlight how the culture of masculinity drives inappropriate behaviour; career pathway challenges and difficulty in accessing work aligned with skills and aptitude; being treated differently on-site due to gender; and the barriers faced around having family responsibilities and caring for children.
(ii) **Consequence-free behaviour**: our results identify how the masculine culture can be an enabler of inappropriate behaviour; the mistreatment of female apprentices; and the lack of workplace support for managing inappropriate behaviour.
(iii) **Culture of silence**: our results highlight the lack of transparent processes for reporting inappropriate behaviour; little to no consequences for co-workers who act inappropriately; and fear of punishment for reporting inappropriate behaviour.

Due to mistreatment in their workplace and a lack of formal support from their employer, many of our participants had to develop their own behavioural and psychological coping mechanisms in

order to manage workplace challenges. As mentioned, resilience was one of the key psychological coping mechanisms women deemed to be essential for managing workplace stressors.

1.4 Communities of practice

Document analysis was undertaken to identify existing communities of practice (networks, structures and forums) for women working in trades and semi-skilled roles within the construction industry. Publicly available materials were accessed and reviewed, as well as materials provided by conveners of the communities of practice (CoP). Seventeen CoP were identified, and their focus included a range of activities:

- supporting women currently working in the industry
- promotion of working in construction with an aim to attract more women into the industry
- raising the employment profile of women and connecting them to jobs

Five of the CoP conveners were interviewed to explore the origins and purpose of their groups. The findings revealed that in most cases the CoP had been established outside of the workplace in response to a lack of formal support structures offered on-site by their employers. The identified CoP had been designed by women to address a gap in the industry and have been driven by a reaction to personal challenges experienced in the workplace. Grassroots, member-led support groups provide spaces for women in construction to connect, affirm each other's value in the industry, offer mentoring relationships, and provide formal and informal opportunities for professional development. Women identified a lack of existing formal and informal support structures, programs, and strategies facilitated by employers and the industry to support women to thrive in their workplace.

1.5 Attraction into the industry

During our interviews, participants spoke about the factors which had initially attracted them to the industry, as well as sharing their preconceptions about the culture of the construction industry prior to entry. While this information may be useful to inform strategies for attracting women, it sits outside the retention focus of the current study and is therefore included as an *appendix.*

1.6 Recommendations

The **wellbeing** of trades and semi-skilled women in construction is **founded on multiple aspects,** as identified in this research. Our research revealed systemic issues 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 'system-wide saturation' approach which leads to zero tolerance of inappropriate behaviour towards women. The system-wide approach must focus on changing the workplace by either reducing or removing stressors (work hazards) rather than relying on women to cope with the hostile workplaces they can experience.

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;

iii. monitored, reported, and audited.

Key recommendations consist of:

i. Zero tolerance of inappropriate behaviour towards women
ii. Adopting procurement practices to promote gender equality
iii. Access to and quality of employment
iv. Measurement of equality
v. Pregnant workers and returning to work
vi. Meeting occupational health and safety obligations
vii. Focus on primary prevention

1.7 Commitment to change and next steps

Using the evidence-base and recommendations outlined in this report, forward action can include:

- Allocation of investment and resources to implement recommendations.
- Prioritisation of recommendations.
- Recommendations are developed into actionable initiatives.
- Initiatives are implemented are evaluated.

The voices of trades and semi-skilled women are integral and must be integrated into the whole-of-industry approach. A participatory approach is therefore imperative in the development and implementation of initiatives aligned with Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy: Building Gender Equality.

1.8 Report structure

The report is organised into 12 parts, as summarised:

Part 1: Report summary	A brief overview of the report is outlined.
Part 2: Research aim and objectives	The research is positioned according to the relevant sections of the Victorian Women in Construction Strategy 2019-2022: Building Gender Equality. Aim and objectives of the research are outlined.
Part 3: Literature review	Research related to gender equality in construction is described, along with key factors known to influence wellbeing in the workplace.

Part 4: Theoretical framework	Wellbeing is considered through a systems lens which considers how the work environment shapes worker wellbeing.
Part 5: Methods for wellbeing study	Data collection and analysis methods are outlined.
Part 6: Findings of wellbeing study	Findings are presented from surveys and interviews with trades and semi-skilled women working in construction.
Part 7: Methods for Communities of Practice study	Data collection and analysis methods are outlined.
Part 8: Findings of Communities of Practice study	Findings are presented on the communities of practice groups identified through the research along with interviews with group convenors and trades and semi-skilled women.
Part 9: Discussion	Key findings from the wellbeing and communities of practice studies are synthesised to examine why women experience ongoing and inappropriate behaviour in the workplace, and how it impacts on their wellbeing.
Part 10: Recommendations	Recommendations are outlined which seek to address work hazards impeding women's wellbeing as well as addressing broader systemic issues related to gender equality.
Part 11: References	All references used in the report are cited in this section.
Part 12: Appendices	Interview participants spoke about attraction to the industry and preconceptions about the industry culture prior to entry. While outside the aim and objectives of this study, the data has been analysed and included in the appendix as it directly relates to other sections of the Victorian Women in Construction Strategy 2019-2022.