



What works? Increasing women's employment in construction: The Australian experience

March 2026



International
Institute for
Women in
Construction



RMIT
University



Australian
Constructors
Association



National
Association of
Women in
Construction
Australia

The Australian construction industry context

In Australia, the construction industry is one of the largest employing industries in the country, comprising of 9.2% of the Australian workforce. The industry employs 1.35 million workers and of these, 13% are women ¹. However, proportionally, there are far fewer women employed in construction trades, with women making up only 3% of construction trades worker ².

Figures 1 and 2 show that the numbers of women working in both professional and trade-based roles in the Australian construction industry have steadily increased in the past decade. This is likely the result of a variety of initiatives – some of which are documented in this paper.

Figures 1 and 2 present absolute employment counts ('000) of women in managerial/professional and trade-based roles in the Australian construction industry, respectively.

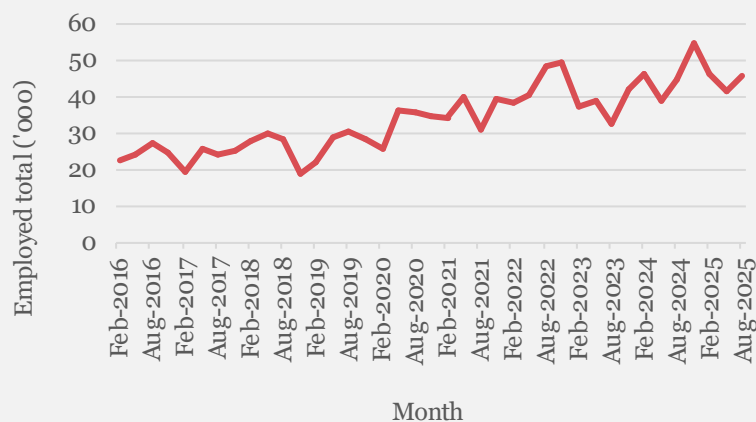


Figure 1.
The distribution of managerial and professional women in construction over time

(Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (September 2025) 'EQ09 - Employed persons by Industry division (ANZSIC) and Occupation major group (ANZSCO) of main job and Sex, August 1986 onwards (Pivot Table)')

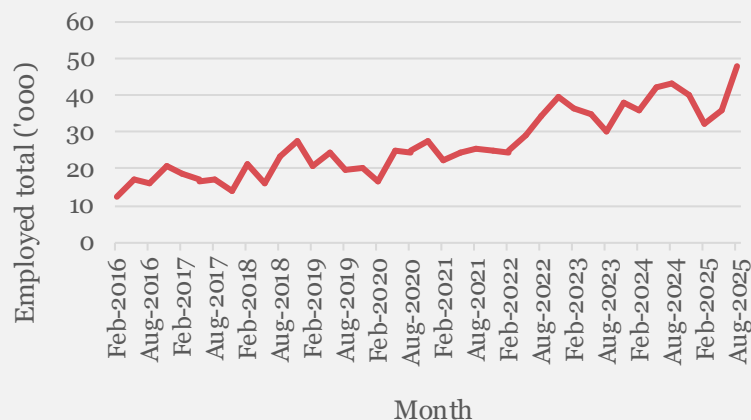


Figure 2.
The distribution of trade-based women in construction over time

(Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (September 2025) 'EQ09 - Employed persons by Industry division (ANZSIC) and Occupation major group (ANZSCO) of main job and Sex, August 1986 onwards (Pivot Table)')

- ◆ Notwithstanding these upward trends, there is still work to be done to further improve – and speed up the increase in - the representation of women in the Australian construction industry. This is important because gender equality is a fundamental human right that also fosters healthier and safer communities and enables people to realise their full potential.

¹ <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-and-industry-profiles/industries/construction>

² https://masterbuilders.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Women-in-Construction_FINAL.pdf

- ◆ The Australian construction industry is also facing a significant shortage of workers. According to Infrastructure Australia's most recent [Market Capacity Report](#), the current shortfall of 141,000 workers is estimated to blow out to 300,000 by mid-2027 as a result of government commitments made to the construction of transport and energy infrastructure as well as housing. This further highlights the economic importance of increasing the numbers of women in the construction workforce.
- ◆ In this context, a wide variety of stakeholders in the Australian construction industry are focused on finding ways to further increase women's employment in the construction industry. Important initiatives are being implemented by government agencies, industry associations, not-for-profit organizations and businesses. Some initiatives represent exciting collaborations between public and private sector stakeholders, all with a commitment to improving the construction industry's ability to attract, retain and support women in its workforce.
- ◆ This paper describes some notable examples of initiatives that are currently being implemented to increase women's participation in the Australian construction industry. It was developed as a starting point to collate stories of initiatives that are having a positive impact. It is acknowledged that there are many organizations and individuals working to promote and increase women's participation in the Australian construction industry. If your initiative is not included, please reach out to [the International Institute for Women in Construction](#) to share your story.
- ◆ Each initiative is briefly described with key information hyperlinked to allow more detailed information, tools and resources to be accessed.

Government initiatives

The National Construction Industry Forum

The Australian (Federal) Government established the [National Construction Industry Forum \(NCIF\)](#) as an ongoing statutory advisory body. Chaired by the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the NCIF comprises representatives of employees (trade unions) and employers. On 22 September 2025, the NCIF endorsed a [Blueprint for the Future](#) as a commitment to addressing structural and cultural issues in the Australian construction industry and build a stronger construction industry. The Blueprint identified workplace inequality, gender inequities and discrimination, including systemic underrepresentation, inflexible work arrangements and inadequate amenities as priority challenges for the Australian construction industry. The Blueprint also included a range of recommendations to help boost skills and women's employment in the industry.



These included recommendations to:

- Explore structural barriers to women's participation in the industry, including support for care, access to childcare for shift workers, Paid Parental Leave entitlements, flexible work arrangements, adequate facilities, etc.
- Consider opportunities to implement the Culture Standard developed by the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (described in a later section of this paper), which aims to transform the industry by focusing on diversity and inclusion, wellbeing and time for life.
- Consider opportunities to promote mentoring networks for women in construction.
- Review building and construction-related qualifications for apprenticeships and traineeships to include skills and knowledge required to support safe and respectful workplaces, and to address gendered violence in the workplace.

The Blueprint also recommended that

- Commonwealth and State and Territory Work Health and Safety Ministers be requested to consider what more can be done to address risks of sex discrimination, harassment and assault in the workplace, including: (i) ensuring equitable and safe workplaces, mandatory access to appropriate and safe amenities and personal protective equipment on all construction sites, and (ii) ensuring strong compliance and enforcement action within their jurisdictions.
- Industry mandates be established for safe and respectful workplace training with support for new and existing employees, supervisors and managers to undertake training.
- Jobs and Skills Councils work with industry to develop training resources to support the take-up of high-quality safe and respectful workplace training.

Victorian State Government Initiatives


The Victorian (State) Government ³ launched its first gender equality strategy, 'Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy' (the GES) in December 2016. The GES provides a framework for action to prevent violence against women by promoting greater gender equality. Taking further steps to implement the GES, the Victorian Government developed a strategy focused specifically on women in construction: 'Building Gender Equality: Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy 2019-2022'. The three priority areas of the Strategy were:

Priority 1:
Attract

Priority 2:
Recruit

Priority 3:
Retain

³ Victoria is Australia's second-most populous state, located in the southeast of Australia's mainland. Melbourne is the capital city of Victoria.



Among a range of initiatives emerging from the Women in Construction Strategy was the Building Equality Policy (BEP), which came into effect on 1 January 2022.

The BEP is founded on three mandatory actions which aim to attract more women to the industry and address the structural and cultural barriers women face in the construction industry:

Action 1: Contractors must meet the following minimum onsite targets for women

3 per cent for each trade position

7 per cent for each non-trade position

35 per cent for each management/supervisory and specialist labour position.

Action 2: Contractors must engage women who are registered apprentices, trainees or cadets for at least 4 percent of the total estimated hours of work on the project.

Action 3: Contractors must develop Gender Equality Action Plans that set out the strategies and measures that will be put in place to promote gender equality in the workplace.

The BEP applies to all publicly funded construction projects valued at AU\$20 million or more and is implemented through the Social Procurement Framework. Victorian Government departments and agencies are responsible for implementing the BEP by incorporating it into tender processes and contracts. Once a project has commenced, departments and agencies monitor how contractors are performing against their BEP commitments.

Accompanying the BEP is a [Respect Code for the Building and Construction Industry](#). The code is an industry-led initiative that is modelled on the provisions of enterprise agreements in the building and construction industry, which now include Safe and Respectful Workplaces provisions. The Code supports efforts to make the construction industry a better place to work for women.

To support actions outlined in the BEP and to encourage more women to consider a career in construction, the Victorian Government has run several campaigns related to women in the construction industry. The "[She Built It](#)" campaign was designed to encourage more women to pursue careers in construction.

Moving forward, an independent research team has been appointed to undertake an evaluation of the BEP from 2024-2026. The evaluation is designed to ensure changes to targets and Gender Equity Action Plan requirements are realistic, achievable and reflect the needs of women. The research team is also assessing any impacts the BEP has had on project delivery outcomes.

A second Strategy focused on women in construction was developed by the Victorian Government and builds on actions coming out of the first Strategy. The '[Building Equitable Futures Strategy 2024-32](#)' sets out four key priority areas that aim to drive systemic, structural, and cultural change in the industry ⁴:

Priority 1:

Driving economic equity and inclusive leadership

Priority 2:

Promoting workplace health and safety laws

Priority 3:

Creating respectful and inclusive workplaces

Priority 4:

Building gender inclusive education and training.

The [Building Equitable Futures Strategy 2024-32](#) is accompanied by the 'Building Equitable Futures Women in Construction - Action Plan 2024-32' which sets out actions for all priority areas.

⁴This Strategy does not apply to small-scale residential construction (less than three storeys, excluding the basement). A bespoke strategy is needed to address the specific industry issues in the small-scale residential sector.



New South Wales State Government initiatives

The New South Wales (State) Government ⁵ Women in Construction Program was established to achieve four pillars supporting the participation of women in construction:

Removing obstacles,

Enhancing fulfilment and retention, and

Creating desire and awareness,

Creating accountability.

The program included multiple components, acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of the challenges experienced in attracting and retaining women in the construction industry.

The Industry Innovation Grants Program was established under the Women in Construction Program. To date, AU\$5.9 million in grant money has been provided to support construction companies and industry associations in the implementation of 34 initiatives to boost women's participation in trades and non-traditional roles in the industry. Detailed case studies documenting each initiative are provided on the Program website to share valuable lessons learned. The funded projects include:

The development of a parental leave toolkit for the industry (undertaken in partnership with the national association of women in construction (NAWIC) and the University of Sydney and described later in this paper)

The piloting of a holiday care program for parents working at a major Sydney infrastructure project, and an initiative to attract mid-career women to the industry.

Grant recipients were required to describe the scalability of their initiatives as a condition of funding and, consequently, many of the solutions developed and trialled have been adopted across industry as a result.

The NSW Government also established a series of 23 Pilot Projects with targets for women in trade and non-traditional roles on large NSW government infrastructure projects. The targets aimed to increase women's representation to 4 per cent for women in skilled trades (e.g. carpenters, plumbers, electricians)⁶ and set a new target that 7 per cent of the project workforce should be women in non-traditional roles (defined as any role where women represent less than 25 per cent of the workforce). It is reported that, between 2023-2025, the Pilot Projects averaged 4 per cent employment for women in trades and 6.3 per cent employment for women in non-traditional roles⁷.

Supported by the NSW Government, 19 project-based women's employment officers were also engaged within the construction companies delivering these Pilot Projects. These employment officers supported the recruitment of women to the projects (often through subcontractor organizations who typically employ the majority of trade-based workers). Women's employment officers also worked to address issues of workplace culture that could potentially impact women's retention.

⁵ New South Wales is Australia's most populous state located on the East coast of Australia's mainland. Sydney is the capital city of New South Wales.

⁶ This target exceeds for the Pilot Projects exceeds commitments made in a 2018 NSW Government Action Plan: A Ten Point 6.6 Commitment to the Construction Sector, which committed to doubling the numbers of women in trade related work in publicly funded infrastructure construction projects from the NSW average of 1% to 2%.

⁷ Infrastructure NSW (2025), NSW Women in Construction: Year 3 Industry Survey Report, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/employment/women-construction/women-construction-program/industry-survey>, accessed 19 November 2025.

The success of these NSW Pilot Projects led to the decision to adopt a stretch target of 50 per cent employment of women across all lifecycle phases of the recently awarded [Bank Street Park Project](#). An independent researcher has been engaged to measure and map the impact of this project, with findings designed to distil key success and challenges and support broader learning across the construction industry. Project completion is expected in 2027.

The NSW Government also ran a large-scale multi-wave industry survey over three years (2023-2025). This survey was conducted annually and collected data about women's experiences in the NSW construction industry. [Full reports](#) for each wave of survey can be downloaded from the Women in Construction website.

The survey results enabled trends to be identified. For example, the survey revealed that women's participation in the industry grew by 3 per cent in 2025, but this growth was lower than in previous years. Importantly, the year-on-year trend over the 3-year period showed a decrease in women's representation in leadership roles in the industry.

The NSW Government is using the survey data to inform the next tranche of its work, by sponsoring both an [Emerging and Executive Women's Leadership Scholarship](#) with NAWIC, partnering with the Australian National University's Global Institute for Women's Leadership to promote gender equality in leadership and inform the future direction of the program, and working with Sydney Metro and Transport for NSW to provide career mapping and training to women to prepare them for leadership roles.

Key challenges identified by both men and women who completed the survey were:

Lack of work-life balance (59%)

(I)

Lack of flexible work hours (48%),

(Ii)

Unequal pay for similar roles (44%).

(Iii)



One of the really important survey findings was that men and women were completely aligned on the challenges of working in construction...that shows, if we address work life balance, flexibility and working hours that will benefit everyone in the industry and positively contribute to improved diversity

Margot Brassil, Director, Construction Leadership Group, Infrastructure NSW & Program Lead, Women in Construction Program.



In addition to these activities, the NSW Government ran a campaign titled '[Hard Work Knows No Gender](#)' seeking to raise awareness about the benefits of employing more women in trade-based and non-traditional roles in the construction industry. Print ready and digital materials were developed to support this campaign and made freely available to download and display in construction workplaces and/or to share via social media. Toolbox talk materials were also developed and made available for construction organisations to share with workers.

The WIC Program was granted an extension to continue at least until 30 June 2027, following a recommendation in the program evaluation process recognising that achieving gender balance in the construction sector cannot be accomplished within a three-year period and instead requires sustained, long-term efforts.

The impact of the NSW Government's Women in Construction program is explored in [Gretchen Gagel's Women Thriving in Construction Podcast with Program Lead, Margot Brassil](#).

Public-private sector collaborations

In 2018, a Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) was established as a ground-breaking collaboration between the Australian Constructors Association (ACA) and the State Governments of New South Wales and Victoria. The CICT was chaired by Gabrielle Trainor AO and membership included executive leaders from the ACA, Australia's largest construction contracting organizations, government agencies and client organizations. This unique public-private sector collaboration sought to address aspects of the construction industry culture believed to be holding back the industry's productivity and performance.

To achieve this, a Culture Standard was developed establishing requirements for construction companies to implement in the delivery of projects. These requirements addressed three inter-related pillars:

- Workers' health and wellbeing,
- Workforce inclusion and diversity, and
- Time for life.

The Culture Standard required that no workers in projects adopting the Standard should work more than 55 hours per week (with a preferred maximum of 50 hours/week), and no worker should work more than five days in every seven. The Culture Standard also required flexible work arrangements to be implemented for all workers.

Specifically relating to gender inclusion and diversity, the Culture Standard requires construction organizations:

To provide workplaces that enable inclusive participation by a diverse workforce, especially women, through self-assessing their current practices and developing a plan for achieving improvement on the project. Organizations are also required to show evidence to support their results.

To provide workplaces that enable inclusive participation by the workforce through ensuring there is no pornography or offensive material in the workplace.

To provide workplaces that enable inclusive participation of a diverse workforce, particularly women, through ensuring appropriate amenities and personal protective equipment (PPE) are provided on the project.

To target the appointment of women across critical workforce segments and strategic decision-making roles and develop a plan for the project to achieve these targets.

To target the appointment of women on their leadership and governing bodies/ advisory boards and demonstrate commitment to this.

To identify and disclose gender pay gaps across job roles; and develop and implement a plan to reduce gender pay gaps.

To create and implement professional standards for the interviewing, shortlisting and selection of people.

The Culture Standard was trialled on five construction projects over a two-year period between 2022 and 2024. The trials were evaluated by a research team led by RMIT University. The results of the trials are documented in an Interim and a Final Report. The findings revealed positive outcomes and minimal additional costs to projects associated with implementing the Culture Standard.⁸

⁸ Bleby, M., (2025), How to save \$8b dollars a year in construction, Australian Financial Review, August 5, 2025. <https://www.afr.com/property/commercial/how-to-save-8-billion-dollars-a-year-in-construction-20250704-p5mcjo>, accessed 22 December, 2025.

Evidence from the trials has already led to the adoption of the Culture Standard by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government into the ACT's Procurement Framework for infrastructure. The ACT Chief Minister commented: "Everyone deserves to feel safe, respected and valued at work. By implementing this standard, we're improving the culture for those delivering infrastructure in the ACT and addressing barriers to attract and retain the skilled workforce needed for future projects"⁹. The New South Wales Government is also reported to have adopted a five-day work week across of its 36 health infrastructure projects worth AU\$2.5 billion. It is anticipated that the positive impacts associated with implementing the Culture Standard (documented in the Interim and Final research reports) will continue to influence the attitudes of public policy makers and decision-makers whose actions shape the way that construction projects are procured and managed.

The work of the CICT is explored in [Gretchen Gagel's Greatness Podcast with CICT Chair, Gabrielle Trainor](#), as well as a [second podcast with Dean Riha](#), who led one of the infrastructure projects at which the Culture Standard was trialled.

Industry associations

Australian Constructors Association Culture Pledge

In 2023, the Australian Constructors Association (ACA), representing Australia's largest construction companies, made a strong commitment to improving the culture of the construction industry in order to position the industry to address the skills shortage and create more diverse and inclusive construction workplaces.



The [ACA Culture Pledge](#) included three components:

- To establish workplace flexibility policies that would guarantee every employee has genuine access to flexible work arrangements.
- To ensure that 75% of ACA member organizations achieve '[Employer of Choice](#)' citation by the [Workplace Gender Equality Agency \(WGEA\)](#) by 2028.
- To attract women from other industries and backgrounds by leveraging and pooling the national resources of ACA members to promote the industry and the benefits of a career in construction.

The Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation is WGEA's voluntary program that recognizes organizations' active commitment to achieving workplace gender equality. At the time of making the Culture Pledge, only four out of 128 construction companies had achieved WGEA citation.

⁹ Australian Capital Territory Government (2025), Setting a New Standard for Culture in Construction, https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/barr/2025/setting-a-new-standard-for-culture-in-construction, accessed 18 October, 2025.

To support the third component of the Culture Pledge, the ACA implemented the ‘It’s Possible’ campaign to encourage women already in the workforce to make a move to a career in construction. The campaign included site tours for women who registered interest and produced a job guide, providing information about working in construction. The campaign helped connect women – who already had transferable skills and qualifications - to job opportunities in the industry.



Improving culture in the construction industry requires both a top down and bottom-up approach. As competition law precludes contractors coming together to do things a certain way, changes to important areas like working hours can only be driven by the Client. This is why the culture standard is so important. On the other hand, there is much that contractors can do without running into trouble with the regulators and that was the idea behind the ACA Culture change pledge



Jon Davies CEO Australian Constructors Association

The critical need to change the culture of the construction industry to improve gender diversity and mental health is highlighted in the ACA’s bold ‘Disrupt or Die’ report. This report is discussed in Grechen Gagel’s Greatness Podcast with Jon Davies.

Civil Contractors Federation (Victoria) Pathways – Shaping Careers, Re-Shaping Industry

The Civil Contractors Federation (CCF), Victoria implemented a program to support women and First Nations participants by offering focused apprenticeships and skills courses in preparation for entry into the civil construction sector. Titled “Pathways – Shaping Careers, Re-Shaping Industry,” the program combined vocational education and training (VET), on-the-job apprenticeships, pre-employment preparation for participants and the provision of culture preparedness training for participants and employers. Evaluation of the program revealed that participants found the services provided to them during the program were helpful, increasing their knowledge of the sector. Moreover, survey data revealed women participants in the program reported significantly lower levels of anxiety related to the male dominance of the civil construction sector after they completed a component of the program delivering Job Safe, Job Ready skills, compared to when they commenced the program. Similarly, women reported higher levels of confidence in working in the sector after completing this training. The Pathways program was a success with a reported 86 per cent of participants moving into jobs after completing the program.

Australian Pipelines and Gas Association – Women’s Leadership Development Program

The Australian Pipelines and Gas Association (APGA) launched its Women’s Leadership Development Program in 2019. Developed in collaboration with Gretchen Gagel of Greatness Consulting and based upon a successful women’s leadership program operating within the American Gas Association, the AGPA Women’s Leadership Development Program:

Provides women working within member organizations with the skills and capabilities they need to progress in their careers,

Creates a support and mentoring network to enable women’s wellbeing and career advancement in the sector.

As of 2025, nine cohorts of women had successfully completed the program.¹⁰

¹⁰ AGPA Annual Report 2025, <https://apga.org.au/hubfs/2025%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Signed%20Financial%20Statements%20APGA.pdf?hsLang=en>, accessed 24 January 2026.

The Program is delivered in three steps:

Step 1 involves one and a half days and involves an in-person kick off-meeting introducing participants to each other, delivering leadership and personal development training, and soliciting input from participants on desired learning outcomes.

Step 2 involves two 90-minute virtual meetings, typically involving guest speakers. These meetings are spaced six weeks apart and content is determined based upon the feedback received in the first meeting. Example topics include:

- personal branding and confidence building
- implementing strategies in a volatile, uncertain complex and ambiguous world
- confidence and dealing with imposter syndrome,
- negotiation skills
- having difficult conversations
- communication skills
- leadership and motivating employees
- creating an agile culture
- high-performing teams, and
- sponsors and mentors.

Step 3 involves another one and a half day in-person meeting during which participants continue to learn from guest speakers focused on their desired learning goals and complete the program.

Between program commencement in 2019 and 2024, the APGA reported increased female membership from 18 to 23 per cent. Further, during one program evaluation, 90 per cent of participants reported an increase in their confidence working as women in the sector.¹¹

Insights into the development and success of the APGA Women’s Leadership Development Program are shared in Gretchen Gagel’s [Greatness Podcast with Steve Davies and Cara Robb](#).

The AGPA also convenes a Women in Pipelines Forum “to promote collaboration, contribution, celebration and empowerment of women by developing an environment of opportunity and success for the growth of women” in all sectors of the industry. The Forum, which is open to employees of AGPA members, organizes development and educational opportunities, as well as social networking events across Australia.

Not-for-profit organisations

NAWIC Australia

The [National Association of Women in Construction](#) (NAWIC) was formed in 1995. NAWIC’s mission is to collaboratively drive gender equity through culture change with a vision to create an equitable construction industry for all by building Fair, Inclusive and Respectful (FIR) workplaces. As NAWIC’s Chief Executive Officer, Cathryn Greville explains: “To attract, recruit, retain and promote women, we need an industry that offers a safe and positive workplace culture, an attractive career option, strong career pathways, and inclusive environments.”



The construction industry needs more than 400,000 new workers over the next five years yet a staggering 110,000 workers leave each year through attrition. The full talent pool remains largely untapped, with women making up only 12.4 per cent of the workforce and just 3.4 per cent of trades roles. No matter which way you look at it – whether from the lens of skills, productivity, economics, safety, wellbeing, financial success – inclusive cultures that enable people to reach their full potential deliver significant benefits to individuals, organisations and communities”



Cathryn Greville, CEO, NAWIC.

¹¹ APGA Women’s Leadership Development Program; Program Description, <https://apga.org.au/hubfs/Women%E2%80%99s%20Leadership%20Development%20Program.pdf?hsLang=en>, accessed 24 January 2026.

NAWIC's more than 16,000 members are provided with:

- ◆ opportunities to connect with industry leaders, fellow professionals, and mentors
- ◆ educational resources, workshops and webinars that support women in construction
- ◆ access to a confidential Employee Assistance Program that provides help with personal or professional issues, such as stress management, work-life balance, career counselling and mental health, and
- ◆ access to publications, newsletters, research reports.

NAWIC continues to undertake vital research that not only shines a spotlight on issues facing women in the construction industry but also offer pathways to reform. A NAWIC commissioned research project, directly addresses the challenges women experience when they transition into and out of parental leave in the construction industry. With funding from the NSW Government's Women in Construction Industry Innovation Program (IIP) Year 2, NAWIC's NSW Chapter partnered with the University of Sydney Business School to conduct the Boosting Retention of Women in Construction project.

Research has previously found that the transitional periods in and out of parental leave are pivotal in a woman's decision to remain in or return to work. This report delves much further into lived experiences of women and offers a pathway to better parental leave support. The creation of an industry-funded parental leave scheme is among the recommendations from the comprehensive study.

The report recommends coordinated action by government, trade unions, employers and clients, setting out practical, evidence-based actions focused on:

The introduction of a parental leave levy to support small businesses and sole traders.

Normalising family-friendly work hours and flex on site.

Investment in safe and inclusive site facilities and practices for pregnant and women workers.

The research produced a [Building Better Workplaces Toolkit](#) to help construction employers to support women as they progress through pregnancy into parental leave and return to work. Learn more about the research project and download the toolkit at www.nawic.com.au/parental-leave

NAWIC collaborated with TDC Global in 2024 to undertake a research study to gain deeper insights into microaggressions affecting women in the sector, and to explore how organisations can better address and prevent them. The "[Not So Little Things Affecting Women in Construction](#)" report into microaggressions, revealed:

88% of women had experienced microaggressions in the sector.

80% were verbal in nature; 41% came from their own managers, 38% from clients.

Alarming, 63% of women saw no change after reporting. 9% saw the behaviours get worse.

Ultimately, as a result of these microaggressions and the related lack of opportunity, flexibility and poor work culture that allows them to thrive, 8% of women had left the industry entirely.

The report contains clear recommendations for organisations and individuals and underscores the importance of addressing microaggressions.

NAWIC has also been awarded AU\$5 million in funding under the Australian Government's Building Women's Careers (BWC) Program. This funding will support a project addressing [Allyship in Action: Transforming Culture to Attract and Retain Women](#). The project will directly combat poor attitudes and behaviours in the industry and engage men in driving positive change to reduce gender bias, promote an inclusive culture and support women's advancement in all sectors of the industry. This project commenced in April 2025 and will run through to March 2028.

NAWIC hosted and facilitated the National Association of Women in Construction Global Webinar in November 2025. More than 800 participants from the global network registered for this dynamic discussion, which included discussion about the Allyship in Action Project. The webinar can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwwu6X9fBLU>

Each year, NAWIC also recognizes organizations and individuals making an exceptional contribution to advancing women's participation in the construction industry through its Awards for Excellence held in each State and Territory, and also nationally. More information about NAWIC's programs, awards, campaigns and advocacy work is available at www.nawic.com.au.

The importance of improving gender diversity in the construction industry and the impetus for establishing NAWIC is discussed in Gretchen Gagel's [Greatness Podcast with NAWIC founder, Dr. Paula Gerber](#). The impact that NAWIC is having in the Australian construction industry is shared in another [Greatness Podcast with Kristine Scheul](#).

Build Like A Girl

[Build Like a Girl](#) is a registered not-for-profit charity organisation run by tradeswomen to support women entering trades-based careers in the building and construction industry. Established in 2020 by Joanne Farrell, a qualified carpenter, licenced builder and certified building designer. Jo explains: *"Though becoming a builder was my dream career, I didn't realise just how hard this path would be. Growing up in a working class area of Wollongong, apprenticeships were generally snapped up by young men at the local steel plant. I quickly found out that the building industry had no time for women as I dropped off my C.V to every builder in the area."* Jo describes how she was consistently rejected, with hallmark comments based in prevalent sexist stereotypes and prejudice:

- "We don't employ girls"
- "You're not strong enough"
- "Girls are a distraction"
- "It's a man's job, not a woman's job"
- "If you want an apprenticeship, go and be a hairdresser."



Build Like a Girl seeks to overcome the barriers to women entering construction trades that Jo experienced back in 1996, and which continue to prevent women entering the industry three decades later.

The Vision of Build Like a Girl is *"That every woman, regardless of age, ethnicity, income level or social status, can freely choose and enter into a trade apprenticeship in the building and construction industry"* and the Mission is to *"Implement real change in the building and construction industry by coordinating programs for women-in-trades across Australia together in one holistic movement."*

Build Like a Girl provides Pre-apprenticeship Pathway Programs, in which participants receive accredited training related to the construction sector, as well as non-accredited training in resumé writing and interview skills and bullying and harassment prevention. In addition, they provide customized mentoring programs structured over 12 months, that provide intensive one-on-one mentoring support, as well as group mentoring circles that provide tools, training and knowledge on building resilience, understanding unconscious bias, bystander intervention, career development and planning and navigating workplace challenges and interactions in a male dominated workforce.

Build Like a Girl acts a hub of valuable resources and information for potential employees, government agencies, Registered Training Organizations and employers seeking to engage with a more diverse workforce. It hosts a customized *Find a Female Tradie* web page, and advertises jobs available in construction organizations that are committed to diversity and inclusion and who share Build Like A Girl's Vision and Mission.

Recently Build Like A Girl partnered with Wisdom Learning, a registered female owned and operated training organization, to design, implement and deliver Respect Onsite training, a focussed training and education program aimed at addressing negative gender-based workplace behaviour and harassment. This training seeks to provide clear guidelines and education to construction leaders, executives, managers, supervisors and on-the-ground- workers on acceptable behaviours in the workplace. The program is based on the groundbreaking *Respect at Work Amendment Act* which aims to make sure more workers are protected and empowered to address unlawful sexual harassment in the workplace.

Build Like A Girl works on three core pillars to enable more women to not only enter a trade apprenticeship, but stay in the industry long term:

recruitment (attracting women into trade roles),

retention (providing comprehensive mentoring and support), and

reform (directly addressing workplace culture and bias).

Over the past five years, Build Like A Girl has actively mentored over 550 women in the early stages of their apprenticeship, and helped over 137 women gain fulltime employment. Additionally, they have given presentations to over 3,650 workers on construction sites throughout Australia. In 2025 over 67 women were engaged in formal mentoring programs and 35 women were employed from pathway programs with a retention success rate of 87 per cent.



More private businesses are seeing the benefit of employing a more gender diverse workforce and there has been a significant increase in engagement with industry stakeholders to address workplace culture issues and improve the working environment for apprentices.



Jo Farrell, Founder, Build Like a Girl.

NexGen

NexGen is a not-for-profit group that partners with construction businesses to:

(i)

change out-dated perceptions of the construction industry

(ii)

showcase the industry's diverse career opportunities from trades and project management to engineering and design, and

(iii)

inspire and prepare the next generation of workers – especially women – to pursue rewarding careers in the sector.

Founded by Dominique Gill, NexGen engages in school visits, careers expos and hands-on workshops to showcase the exciting opportunities a career in construction offers. NexGen also partners with industry leaders to provide work experience opportunities to young people while they are still in school and/or when they are looking for a work placements once they leave. By directly connecting young people to real-world construction jobs, NexGen enables potential new entrants to the industry to learn what a career in construction could look like and gain valuable work experience that makes them more attractive to prospective construction employers when they complete their education/training.

NexGen also actively strived to connect students with diverse role models and mentors to provide support as they embark upon construction careers. In 2024 NexGen commenced a new program focused on introducing construction careers to Kindergarten and Year 1 students, aged five to seven years, reflecting the importance of challenging gender stereotypes before they are established. Children were introduced to two Australian books [This Girl Built That](#) and [I Want to Be an Engineer](#), to communicate how problem-solving and creativity are integral to construction jobs. NexGen also distributes a series of [Women in Trades videos](#) (developed by construction company Hansen Yunken), as well as career outreach resources and information packs for schools. Currently NexGen has over 150 Ambassadors and has provided support to 10,000+ job-seekers.



NexGen was set up to open doors that too many young people never realize are there. Our focus is on breaking down outdated stereotypes by giving students real exposure to industry through education, experience and genuine connections. The impact is simple but powerful; more informed career choices, stronger pathways from school to work, and an industry that better reflects the diversity of the next generation.

Lauren Fahey, Director, NexGen



Tradeswomen Australia

The not-for-profit [Tradeswomen Australia](#) group works to support women entering into trades in all industry sectors, including construction. The group aims to ensure that girls, women and non-binary people “feel safe, secure and comfortable at every workplace and [are] able to participate in the career of their choice.” A range of programs and services are provided, including trades workshops, information sessions, provision of career support services, gender diversity and inclusion programs and access to qualified employers.

Tradeswomen Australia has undertaken an extensive [body of research](#) investigating the barriers to women entering trades, as well as submitting Government White Papers highlighting challenges faced by women commencing trades careers.

A range of training and consulting services is available to employers to help them to create diverse and inclusive workplace cultures that will support the employment of women in trades. These include:

Measurement and benchmarking of workplaces against gender best practices and providing recommendations about how to improve inclusion and equity in the workplace.

Staff training (virtual or face-face and facilitated group conversations) in topics such as diversity and inclusion, gender bias, bystander action, recruitment bias, and mental wellbeing.

One-on-one leadership coaching for managers and supervisors to explore issues of diversity and inclusion relevant to participants’ own roles aimed at creating leaders, advocates and allies at all levels within organisations.

Recruitment support to provide strategies that can help organisations to recruit a gender diverse workforce.

Training relating to becoming an active bystander, including how to intervene safely when poor behaviours are observed.

Training in unconscious bias and how this can impact recruitment.

Mentoring support for supervisors and apprentices.



The Tradeswomen Australia website provides useful resources for women to learn about different industries that employ trades-based workers, including building and construction. It includes podcast interviews with women in trades and video resources for job-seekers to help them secure employment. For example, [videos resources are available on cover letter and resumé writing](#). A jobs board is also provided through which trades-based job opportunities are advertised.

The work of Tradeswomen Australia is discussed in Gretchen Gagel's [Greatness Podcast with Jane Sydenham-Clarke](#).

Awesome Women in Construction

[Awesome Women in Construction](#) (AWIC) is a not-for-profit organisation “dedicated to providing support, resources, and networking opportunities to women working across Australia’s construction industry.”

Based in Queensland and founded in 2017 by Amanda Bulow, AWIC’s goal is to *create “a supportive, like-minded community of women to empower and uplift each other.”*

Through partnerships with TAFE Queensland and key industry organizations, AWIC offers Construct Your Future, a free three-week job ready program through which women looking to enter the construction industry participate in practical workshops and work experience as well as learning from guest speakers. The Construct Your Future program is designed to build women’s interest and confidence in pursuing a career in construction. AWIC also delivers a School-to-Work Transition Program to provide female high school students (grades 10, 11, and 12) with the skills and opportunities required to successfully pursue a career in construction. Among other activities, AWIC engages in an extensive annual Roadshow through which students are provided with immersive experiences, industry-led site visits, factory tours and information sessions to provide insight into career opportunities in construction. In 2025, the [Roadshow](#) engaged more than 4623 students, with 13 schools visited and 17,081 kilometres travelled.

AWIC also partners with [BeReady](#), a female-founded technology company that provides tools and resources to help young women to explore – and ultimately pursue – a career in construction. In a partnership with Queensland University of Technology, BeReady developed Breaking Ground, three interactive games through which young people, parents and employers can explore the types of jobs available in the construction industry. Breaking Ground is available via [Google Play](#) or the [App Store](#).

Organization or project-specific initiatives —

All women tunnelling crew

In the state of Victoria, the construction of a multi-stage orbital railway project is underway. The [Suburban Rail Loop](#) (SRL) will connect suburbs, reducing city-bound travel by linking significant employment, education, and health hubs in the suburbs of Melbourne.

The world’s [first all women tunnel boring machine crew](#) has been established to construct the SRL’s East Twin Tunnels. Close to 870 applications were received to join this crew, reflecting a high level of interest among women in joining the construction industry.

The team will be one of several crews working on the tunnels and includes 25 highly skilled roles, including Tunnel Boring Machine operator, gantry and segment crane operators, grouters and support roles.



A project the size and scope of Suburban Rail Loop offers fantastic opportunities for women and it's wonderful to see so many who want to develop their careers in construction.



Isolde Piet, SRL East Tunnels South Construction Manager

Tunnelling started in 2026 and the all-women crew is expected to be operating by 2027. The Tunnels South contract, where the crew will work, will build 16km of twin tunnels between the Melbourne suburbs of Cheltenham and Glen Waverley. SRLA has also committed to at least 10 per cent of total labour hours on the Tunnels South works being worked by women.

RMIT University – Play It Safe training resources

Play It Safe is the creation of a team of researchers working in RMIT's Safety and Health Innovation Network. The Play It Safe team create interactive, video-based training resources that are tailor-made to address specific industry issues. Resources are developed using a participatory design process which ensures that every training resource is user-centric, true to life, and creative.

Having received philanthropic funding from the Telematics Trust, the team developed an interactive video-based training resource designed to raise awareness of the issue of sexual harassment and help to develop respectful and safe workplaces in the construction industry. The training resource, Breaking the Silence, Building Respect, is based on real life stories collated from interviews with people working in the construction industry. It has been adopted by several large Australian construction companies. A recent survey of workers within one company found 93 per cent of users indicated that the training had raised their awareness of workplace harassment and its impacts and 99 per cent thought that the training would help to build more respectful workplaces.

In 2025, the Play It Safe team received NSW Government funding in partnership with the Master Builders Association (NSW) under the Women in Construction Industry Innovation Grant program. This funding supported research into the impact of workplace humour on women in the NSW construction industry. The research led to the development of further video-based training resources, titled Not "Just a Joke"

All Play It Safe training materials are available at no cost to users via the Play It Safe website.





Immense gratitude to our research contributors:

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