



Department of Local Government,
Industry Regulation and Safety

State of Affairs Report

Reforming industry culture – WA
commercial construction industry

August 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal peoples as being the custodians of Western Australia.

We acknowledge the enduring connection Aboriginal people continue to share with the land, sea and sky through both their ancestral ties and custodianship to Country.

We pay our respect to Elders both past and present, and acknowledge the value brought to our department through the collective contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Western Australia.





Disclaimer:

The information presented in this document is not definitive and does not seek to represent final government policy or usurp any decision-making process.

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Building and Construction Consultative Committee Foreword

Western Australia's (WA) building and construction industry is fundamental to the State's economic resilience and prosperity. It delivers the buildings and infrastructure that enable commerce, the energy transition, defence, dwellings, and our water, transport, education and health services. In the process of delivering these buildings and infrastructure, the industry employs tens of thousands of Western Australians across metropolitan and regional communities.

The building and construction industry is confronting cultural and workforce challenges that, if left unaddressed, risk undermining its capacity to meet an unprecedented pipeline of work across commercial/ infrastructure, civil and housing sectors. Long working hours, persistent barriers to diversity and poor mental health outcomes have become systemic issues rather than isolated problems, that when combined with an already constrained workforce and inter-sectoral competition for that workforce, present the industry with a challenge it must navigate.

This State of Affairs Report sets out a clear case for reform, reflecting a broad consensus across Government, builders, industry associations and unions that cultural change is no longer optional, but essential. The opportunities for reform outlined are evidence based and provide a practical pathway to lift standards, improve workplace conditions, and ensure the industry remains a desirable career for current and future generations.

Together, they strengthen productivity and position the sector to be fit for purpose for the future.

Background

The WA building and construction sector underpins growth across multiple government priorities, including infrastructure investment in hospitals, schools, energy transition, defence and housing. Demand for skilled labour is intensifying, with construction increasingly competing with mining, energy and defence sectors for workers.

A contemporary workplace culture is now a critical enabler of workforce attraction, retention and performance. Improving workplace culture is central to addressing labour shortages, and ensuring projects are delivered safely, efficiently, and to a high standard, optimising productivity.

WA construction industry at a glance



Critical state infrastructure



Major employer



Unprecedented pipeline of work

What is the state of WA's construction industry culture?

The construction industry culture is widely described as adversarial, rigid and male dominated. Long working hours, fatigue and harmful workplace behaviours undermine wellbeing and limit participation and retention, particularly for women, apprentices, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTQI+ workers, culturally diverse workers and younger cohorts. While across the industry there are examples of good practice, progress remains uneven and has not yet translated into sector wide cultural change.

Why is there a need for change?

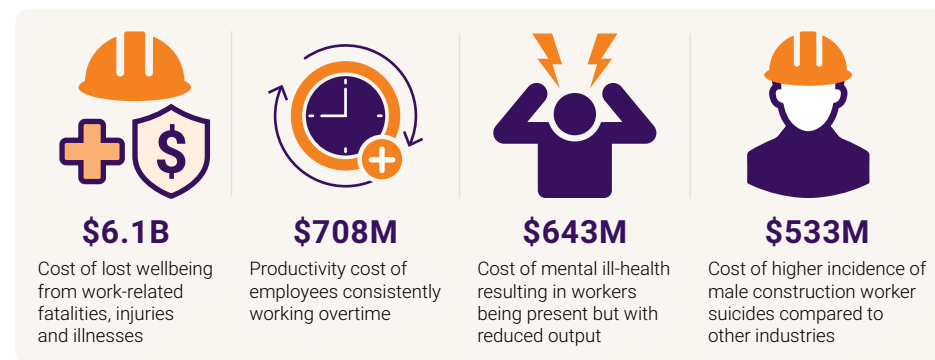
The building and construction industry's workforce challenges extend beyond simple labour supply constraints.

This report, consistent with broader research, identifies that entrenched industry conditions characterised by resistance to diversity and inclusion, the normalisation of behaviours that undermine worker wellbeing, and a prevalence of long working hours/lack of flexibility that limits work-life balance, are contributing to declining workforce stability.

These factors are constraining the industry's ability to broaden its talent pool and compete effectively for labour, while also presenting potentially escalating work health and safety risks for employers and employees.

As a labour-intensive sector, the ability to attract and retain an optimal workforce is essential for the construction industry's long-term viability.

The cost of inaction on cultural reform to the Australian construction industry has been estimated as approximately \$8 billion per year.¹



Source: data from the Culture in Construction Taskforce summary of the Cost of Doing Nothing Report 2021.²

Data from regular surveys conducted by Jobs and Skills Australia highlights that nationally, a significant proportion of employers who attempt to recruit in the construction industry experience difficulty in hiring staff.³

Why the construction industry needs to improve its culture



Hiring challenges



Safety concerns



Worker retention



Diversity imbalance

Without targeted and sustained cultural reform, the sector risks placing further strain on its workforce pipeline, reducing performance, and limiting its inability to meet future demand. Addressing workplace culture is therefore critical to improving industry resilience, strengthening safety and wellbeing outcomes, and ensuring the long-term viability of the construction sector.

"For an industry that has such an important part to play in Australia's economic recovery and future growth, the construction industry is significantly hampered by cultural challenges that must be urgently addressed if it is to progress."⁴



Workforce snapshot

The pipeline of commercial and infrastructure projects, as well as residential developments intended to boost the housing supply in WA, is at an all-time high. There is a significant shortage of skilled labour available to support these construction projects.

The construction industry is WA's second largest employer behind healthcare and social assistance. As at February 2026, the industry employed 160,600 people, representing 9.7 per cent of the 1.66 million people employed in WA.⁵ In the 12 months preceding, the construction industry workforce grew by 2.5 per cent.

There is a significant shortage of skilled labour available to support the construction required to give effect to the current pipeline of State and Commonwealth Government projects, efforts to address the housing crisis, and other private sector developments.

At a national level, these pressures are expected to intensify. Modelling by BuildSkills Australia (current at May 2026) indicates that the built environment workforce will need to expand significantly to meet projected national demand, reaching approximately 2.5 million workers by 2035.⁶

Under current supply conditions, the national construction industry is expected to face a shortfall of more than 300,000 workers, with the gap peaking at around 15 per cent by 2030.⁷

In WA, these national trends are amplified by strong projected population growth, a substantial pipeline of infrastructure projects, and competition for labour from adjacent sectors such as mining, energy and defence.

At the same time, demographic pressures, including an ageing workforce that creates ongoing attrition as older workers leave the industry, are reducing the effective labour supply, placing further strain on workforce sustainability.⁸

The combination of increasing demand and constrained supply indicates that, without targeted intervention, the gap between the number of workers available and those required will continue to widen through to 2035.

This presents a significant risk to the timely delivery of infrastructure, major projects and housing, as well as broader economic growth, and ultimately productivity and profitability.

The BCCC's role in cultural reform

The Building and Construction Consultative Committee (BCCC) was established to provide a forum for high level dialogue and to advise the State Government on a broad range of matters relating to the commercial construction industry including, but not limited to, industrial relations, workplace safety, diversity, economic issues, skills and training, and jobs growth.

The BCCC is firmly committed to driving meaningful cultural change across the industry. Its members unanimously endorse the need for cultural reform.

The commercial construction sector has a unique opportunity to act as a catalyst for cultural change, working in partnership with government to reshape industry norms and expectations across the supply chain by adopting progressive practices and building momentum for wider reform.

Methodology

The BCCC undertook extensive research and consultation, including interviews with industry and government leaders, participation in workshops, and analysis of literature and data at a national and state level to inform this work and to identify the future opportunities for cultural reform.

National best-practice models, including the Culture Standard for the Construction Industry (Culture Standard) published in 2025 by the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce,⁹ were identified and consideration was given to information on procurement levers, pilot programs and regulatory frameworks across other jurisdictions capable of driving change.

Cultural drivers across three themes were examined, consistent with the three pillars in the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce's Culture Standard:



Diversity and Inclusion

Improving the gender balance and cultural and age composition of the industry by fostering workplace culture that engages and retains women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ+ workers, migrants, mature age workers, youth and other diversity groups.



Wellbeing

Providing a safe workplace both physically and psychosocially, by addressing racism, bullying and sexual harassment.



Time for Life

Flexible working options and reduced weekly average working hours to ensure the workforce has adequate time to rest and maintain a work-life balance.

Key cultural challenges for the WA construction industry

The WA construction industry is experiencing workforce pressures as workers are in demand across other sectors. At the same time, a range of structural barriers continues to affect the industry's culture and its ability to attract, train and retain a sustainable workforce. These barriers include the following:

- **Lower rates of pay for apprentices** when compared to non-apprenticed workers, and reductions in Commonwealth incentives for employers to employ an apprentice.
- **Constraints on the training system** including apprenticeships and the availability of trainers with industry experience.
- **The highly competitive nature of the construction tendering process**, with heavily price driven contracting, which can create pressures that influence workforce culture, shaping behaviours around safety, industrial relations, and the treatment of workers on site.
- **Fragmentation of the workforce by labour hire and subcontracting models**, which add flexibility but can dilute accountability, creating pressures and inconsistencies that lead to worksite cultures that undermine safety, trust, and respectful behaviours.
- **Rising cost-of-living pressures and limited housing availability** impacting the industry's ability to attract workers to WA from interstate and overseas markets.
- **Inconsistent trade licensing across Australia**, which impacts on the quality of workmanship and the industry's ability to mobilise a workforce from interstate or abroad, contributing to workforce shortages on construction sites.

- **Safe systems of work** including workplace conduct and fair conditions, which are shaped by commercial pressures, fragmented work arrangements, and diffused accountability, and which collectively influence behaviours and can normalise unsafe or inappropriate workplace culture if not systemically addressed.

The BCCC's focus remains on strengthening safe, inclusive workplace culture while progressing reforms to remove structural barriers across training, contracting, mobility and workforce conditions. This builds on initiatives such as the National Construction Industry Forum's *Blueprint for the Future* to support a more sustainable and resilient industry.¹⁰



Diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are critical to the long term sustainability, productivity and resilience of the construction industry. As an industry facing skills shortages, an ageing workforce, and changing workforce expectations, construction must broaden participation and remove barriers that prevent people from entering, remaining and progressing in the sector.

There is a growing demand across the industry for more flexible work arrangements to support family responsibilities, lifestyle preferences and the expectations of a modern workforce.

Women

There is a strong imperative for greater gender equality in the construction industry and for removing barriers to female participation. The construction industry is out of step with most other industries in relation to gender diversity. This is reflected in the low female participation rate in the WA construction industry of 13.4 per cent for the February quarter 2026,¹¹ and a national gender pay gap of 25 per cent.¹²



Photo credit – Getty Images

In 2021 the Construction Training Fund (CTF) undertook research with parents, women and youth to determine why women are not choosing a career in the WA construction sector. The barriers identified by the CTF included a lack of female representation and negative perceptions about the following:

- Working conditions, such as a lack of suitable facilities for women on sites, adequate lighting and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Diversity of roles available.
- Training.
- Career progression opportunities.¹³

Other barriers to female participation in the industry identified through interviews and workshops include harmful workplace behaviours (such as sexism, sexual harassment and denying promotion based on gender), childcare responsibilities, and lack of flexible working arrangements. These issues remain of particular concern to female apprentices.

The 2022 Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) national survey noted that when compared by gender, there is a distinct difference in the estimated likelihood of workplace sexual harassment for women in the construction industry (29 per cent) than for men (eight per cent).¹⁴

Men

Male workers make up most of the Australian construction industry's workforce (87 per cent)¹⁵ and like all workers, they too value and deserve safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces.

Men also seek access to flexible work arrangements, including parental leave and adaptable work hours, to enable them to better balance work and personal responsibilities. Through the interviews the BCCC undertook with organisations and researchers for this report, it is evident that working environments with hyper masculine cultures are increasingly untenable for all workers.

As noted, the 2022 AHRC national survey found that the estimated likelihood of workplace sexual harassment for men in the construction industry was eight per cent.¹⁶



Photo credit – Getty Images

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The construction sector is one of the top five industries of employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are over-represented in labouring roles and under-represented as professionals and managers relative to the working age non-Aboriginal population.¹⁷

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in building and construction in WA remains low and employers report that engagement can be resource intensive and challenging.

Barriers to employment in the construction sector may include racism, discrimination, geographical limitations of work, criminal history, and limited access to culturally appropriate training and workplace support.

The 2021 House of Representatives Inquiry into Indigenous Participation in Employment and Business noted that due to the difficulties of servicing remote communities and the housing shortages in these communities, the construction sector is an important source of training and employment opportunities for people in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.¹⁸

LGBTIQ+ workers

Data from 2022 indicates that around one in 20 (4.5 per cent or 910,600) Australians aged 16 years and older identify as LGBTIQ+, with 9.5 per cent of younger people (16 to 24 years) identifying as LGBTIQ+. ¹⁹

Australian research into the experiences of LGBTIQ+ workers in the construction industry is limited, with many workers not feeling comfortable to self-identify. The BCCC's Exploring Psychosocial Hazards Workshop in 2024 raised this as an area where industry could benefit from cultural change.

A 2021 study by the University of New South Wales Human Rights Institute examined barriers to recruitment and retention of LGBTIQ+ workers in the construction industry. The research found there is significant variation across the industry regarding efforts towards LGBTIQ+ inclusivity. Further, it found that for LGBTIQ+ individuals, ongoing participation in the sector was compromised by factors such as:

- A perception that making their sexual orientation known to superiors would undermine the security of their jobs.
- In some cases, significant anxiety in continually scanning their environment for emotional safety, limiting their productivity.
- Failures to respond appropriately to LGBTIQ+ discrimination, with superiors in some cases failing to act on homophobic or discriminatory behaviours in the workplace, causing LGBTIQ+ workers to question their future in the industry. ²⁰

Age

Age discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably or not given the same opportunities as other workers in a similar situation, because they are considered to be either too young or too old. This is particularly relevant with apprentices entering the construction industry and workers nearing the end of their career and transitioning towards retirement.

In 2024–25, 59 per cent of the age discrimination complaints made under the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* to the AHRC were related to employment. ²¹

Mature age workers

While older workers bring skills and knowledge to the workplace, age discrimination remains a significant barrier to their meaningful participation in the workforce. Many workers approaching retirement are vulnerable to experiencing a loss of identity. Further, many older workers may not be financially prepared for retirement and are experiencing high levels of stress which may lead to depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

Some employers interviewed by the BCCC spoke of workplace efforts to create positive working cultures where mature aged workers felt valued and contributed meaningfully to the organisation. The underutilisation of the mature workforce is an area that industry can capitalise on with targeted recruitment, flexible working arrangements and task specific roles for skilled workers.

Youth and apprentices

In the construction industry, younger workers can face bias and challenges due to generational differences affecting how they are perceived and treated.

Interviews with government, Apprentice Connect Australia Providers, Government Training Organisations, and industry representatives support the statement that intergenerational differences significantly affect the number of young people willing to enter the industry.

Some key issues contributing to this are:

- Apprentices are treated differently depending on the age of their employer, with older employers described as having an 'old school tradie' mentality which is hostile towards conversations surrounding emotional and personal issues.²²
- Older workers often view younger workers as inexperienced, which can lead to scepticism about their skills, decision-making abilities, or work ethic.
- The industry is often hierarchical, and younger workers may be seen as lower in the hierarchy or not deserving of leadership roles until they gain more experience, despite demonstrable expertise. This can limit their career advancement opportunities.
- Communication styles may differ leading to misunderstandings or frustration.



Yearly apprenticeship commencements for construction trades workers in WA have increased each year since 2023 and 15.5 per cent in the year to December 2025



Total numbers in training in construction were up 2.3 per cent over the year to December 2025

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.²³

WA is currently performing well compared to other states on overall apprenticeship completion rates in the construction industry.

Construction trades apprenticeship and traineeship commencements in WA have increased in the last few years, although they remain lower than the recent peak recorded in 2021.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) workers

Underutilisation of CALD workers can be a consequence of conscious and unconscious hiring bias, discrimination and a lack of culturally competent recruitment practices.

Barriers and challenges for migrant workers and people from CALD backgrounds within the construction industry include:

- Access to suitable information (in their preferred language).
- Understanding of cultural norms and cultural biases.
- Different tolerances for risk taking behaviours.
- Housing availability.
- An understanding of the support networks and services available within the workplace and broader community.

Workshops, including the BCCC Exploring Psychosocial Hazards workshop, identified that racism is regularly identifiable on WA construction sites.

This is consistent with other research conducted including a 2010 research study survey of 1,155 on-site Australian construction workers that found:

- **32 per cent** indicated that they had been called names or insulted because of their ethnic background.
- **57 per cent** reported that there was racist graffiti on sites where they had worked.
- **52 per cent** indicated that they had made derogatory jokes about other peoples' ethnic background.

The study also found that perceptions of discrimination based on culture and ethnicity exist in various areas, including access to higher paying jobs, working conditions and career opportunities.²⁴

Workers with disabilities

A 2022 study into disability employment in the construction industry found barriers for disabled workers, including:

- Stigma and discrimination.
- Concerns around equality and fairness of workplaces and systems.
- Non-disclosure of a person's disability.
- Lack of overall awareness of disability in the sector.²⁵

Some disabilities (and injuries) can be acquired throughout a person's working life.

Businesses can support workers returning to work after acquiring a disability or injury by reviewing return-to-work policies, developing tailored plans, implementing workplace adjustments, and fostering inclusive communication to ensure a safe, respectful, and productive transition.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing issues in the construction industry are a significant concern due to the physically demanding nature of the work, the often high-stress environment, the impacts of workplace culture and other psychosocial hazards.

A 2018 Victorian study found that white collar professional staff in the construction and infrastructure industry are highly stressed, report compromised mental and physical health, have unsatisfactory levels of work-life balance, and exhibit very high rates of burnout. Increasing demands, long hours, time pressure, and expectations to operate outside of normal working hours require unsustainable effort from these professional employees that is resulting in mental and physical damage to the workforce.²⁶

These issues can affect both physical and mental health of employees, leading to decreased productivity, increased injury rates, and poor quality of life for workers and their families.

Extended working hours in the construction industry contribute to increased employee turnover, absenteeism, and higher levels of stress-related leave.²⁷

Wellbeing indicators remain a concern, with national and WA reports identifying elevated levels of mental health issues and suicidal ideation among construction workers compared to the general population

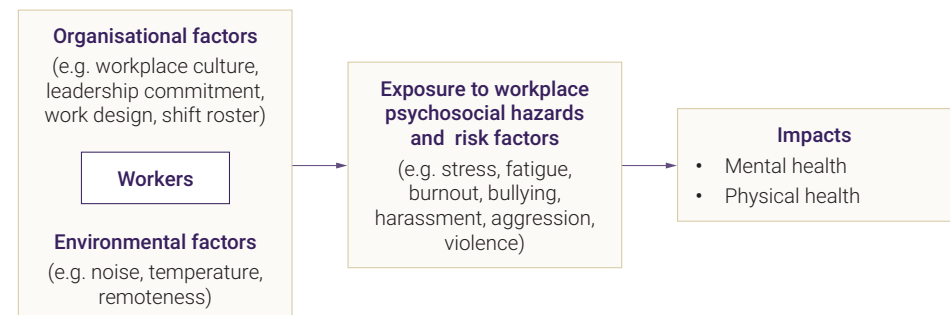
Psychosocial hazards

Workplace psychosocial hazards are aspects of work and/or work situations that can cause psychological or physical harm and are related to the psychological and social conditions of the workplace rather than just the physical conditions. These hazards include bullying, violence, aggression, harassment, stress, fatigue and burnout, all of which can be harmful to the health of workers and compromise their wellbeing.

Some of the psychosocial hazards and risk factors that create psychosocial risk to workers in the construction industry include:

- High job demands, including tight timeframes and low-cost operations to “win the next job”, which can promote a culture of risk taking and burnout.
- The construction industry’s heavy utilisation of labour hire, which can negatively impact the ability of workers to plan for the future and for worksite operators to develop a suitable culture.
- Harmful workplace behaviours including bullying, sexual harassment and racism.
- Environmental conditions including extreme heat, poor air quality and excessive noise.
- Remote or isolated work, which can impact workers away from their support networks and impact worker fatigue and burnout.

Stakeholder interviews and forums indicate that, compared to the resources sector, construction is lagging in the adoption of psychosocial safety risk management across broad parts of the industry, particularly in residential construction, with Tier 1 contractors leading the uptake of better practice models.



The influence of workplace conditions on workers' health – diagram from the Code of Practice on Psychosocial hazards in the workplace.²⁸

Mental health

Growing concern for the mental health of building and construction workers exists, with many workers experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviours alongside broader mental health issues. Workers can be significantly impacted by the stigma associated with seeking help or reporting psychosocial hazards including unsafe behaviours that contribute to declining mental health.

WA construction workforce mental health



Suicide risk

5–6 times more likely to die by suicide than from an on-site incident

2 times higher suicide risk than other employed Australian men



Mental health

A significant number of construction workers have been shown to have a mental health condition and elevated rates of depression and anxiety

Source – Construction Industry Culture Taskforce and Mates in Construction WA 2024.²⁹

The construction industry in WA relies heavily on small to medium enterprises with the majority of construction businesses in Australia employing fewer than 20 people. These businesses are being impacted by poor mental health among workers and are constrained in their ability to offer policies, services and channels for reporting inappropriate behaviour, and access to mental health support services through Employee Assistance Programs.

The 2024 WA Construction Industry Suicide and Mental Health Benchmarking Study, which was a collaboration between MATES in Construction WA and the University of Western Australia, explored the complex factors contributing to worker's mental health within the sector.

Construction workers are reported to be six times more likely to die from suicide than a workplace incident.³⁰

Lifetime rates of suicide plans **1.7 times higher** than the general adult Australia population

Rates of suicide plans in 12 months prior to survey nearly **four times higher** than the general adult Australia population

Source – 2024 Mates in Construction WA Survey - Lifetime and recent suicide plans.³¹

Physical hazards

In 2024, there were 37 fatalities within the Australian construction industry, including nine in WA.³² The nine reported fatalities in construction accounted for nearly 30 per cent of the 31 total fatalities within WA workplaces in 2024.³³

Safe Work Australia noted in its Key Work Health and Safety Statistics 2024 report that the number of fatalities in the construction industry in 2023 was 36 per cent higher than the 5-year average for the industry (between 2019 to 2023).³⁴

WorkSafe WA reported three workplace fatalities in the construction industry in 2025.³⁵

Fatalities and injuries in the construction industry are commonly caused by falls from heights, machinery accidents, repetitive strain injuries and being struck by objects. Workers are at high risk of musculoskeletal problems such as back pain, joint issues and strain injuries caused by lifting heavy materials, awkward postures, and repetitive tasks.

WorkCover WA industry statistics for 2024–25 highlight that the construction industry has a claim cost and frequency rate that are higher than the workers compensation scheme averages. In 2024–25 the most common injury experienced by workers in the construction industry was a traumatic joint/ligament and muscle tendon injury, accounting for over 45 per cent of injuries.³⁶

Time for life

Finding a suitable balance between work and daily living is a challenge that all workers face. Australian construction workers often experience long hours, tight deadlines, and high physical demands.

These challenges can make it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Poor work-life balance is associated with stress, fatigue and burnout which can lead to poor mental and physical health.

Work hours

Increasing demands, long hours, time pressure, and expectations to operate outside of normal working hours require unsustainable effort from workers that is resulting in mental and physical damage to the workforce.

The 2024 MATES WA survey found that 37.6 per cent of respondents reported their work frequently interferes with their personal or family life, contributing to heightened stress, anxiety and burnout, which can lead to diminished wellbeing, reduced job satisfaction and lower productivity.³⁷



64% of construction workers reported working over 50 hours per week



59% of construction workers are unsatisfied with their work-life balance

Flexibility

The 2024 report on a study undertaken by the University of Technology Sydney in partnership with the Master Builders Association of New South Wales into a five-day working week in the construction industry concludes that improving peoples' work-life balance is far more complex than just reducing hours and days worked. The report also indicated that work-life balance is most effectively and efficiently achieved by providing people with greater and more equal access to flexibility and control over when, where, how and for how long they work.³⁸

It is important for leadership to have these conversations during the contracting and recruitment phases of projects and with workers throughout the project lifecycle as work ebbs and flows.

Increasing the availability of flexible working arrangements, leave and other support services is important to enable equal workforce participation and caring responsibilities.

The *National Working Families Report 2024* found that across all industries there is still a concerning low percentage of men utilising paid parental leave options offered by workplaces, and stereotypes around men being the main breadwinners and women being the primary caregiver remain largely entrenched.³⁹

The Culture Standard

The Culture Standard was developed by the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) which included researchers, members from the Australian Constructors Association (ACA), and representatives from the New South Wales and Victorian Governments.



The Culture Standard provides a flexible framework for clients and contractors to work in partnership to address culture challenges impacting industry arising from excessive work hours and fatigue, poor mental health, and failure to attract a diverse workforce.

The CICT conducted a series of pilot studies across five diverse commercial construction project and contract types in Victoria and New South Wales. These pilots were a new high school, redeveloped hospital, and major civil construction projects including road upgrades and a level crossing removal.

These pilot programs sought to assess the benefits of reduced work hours, flexibility and access to mental health, wellness and leadership training on productivity, capacity and retention rates.⁴⁰

Research on the experience of the pilot projects indicated workers were overwhelmingly positive and supportive of working under the Culture Standard and its ability to improve workplace culture and social relationships with workers and their families. Retention was found to be much higher, productivity was enhanced due to a variety of health and work-related factors, and female participation rates were higher.⁴¹

A cost-benefit analysis undertaken on the pilot projects found no observable evidence to suggest that the implementation of the Culture Standard adversely affected the cost or time required to deliver the projects, or that project safety performance was impacted.⁴²

The Culture Standard is being implemented on all government funded infrastructure projects in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) by embedding it into the ACT procurement framework for infrastructure projects.

Other jurisdictions continue to explore opportunities for its implementation, including WA. The CICT and the ACA have encouraged the States and Territories to support the progression of implementation of the Culture Standard.

Industry opportunities

Drawing on insights from the research and interviews conducted, a clear set of practical actions has emerged to support industry in driving meaningful and sustained change. These actions are designed to address systemic barriers, strengthen workforce capability, and foster more inclusive, safe and supportive workplaces across the sector.

It is recognised that some industry opportunities may not be directly applicable or fully transferable to all businesses, particularly smaller to medium enterprises, where scale, resourcing, and operational context may limit implementation.

1. Strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion

- Actively address recruitment and hiring biases.
- Broaden access to employment by supporting underrepresented groups, including women, older workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.
- Provide targeted support mechanisms such as mentoring, networking opportunities and Aboriginal Liaison Officers.
- Conduct pay gap analyses and implement actions to improve gender equity.

2. Improve mental health and wellbeing support

- Establish comprehensive mental health frameworks, including policies, training and access to professional support (e.g. Employment Assistant Programs, onsite services).
- Ensure services are culturally appropriate and accessible, including the provision of translation where required.
- Train employees in mental health first aid and create onsite support roles.
- Implement safe, confidential (including anonymous) reporting systems for harmful behaviours, and processes to address issues raised.

3. Foster respectful and inclusive workplace culture

- Demonstrate leadership commitment to respectful, empathetic and professional workplace behaviours.
- Actively prevent and address bullying, harassment and harmful conduct.
- Promote inclusive communication and engagement that considers cultural needs and language barriers.
- Build connection and trust through mentoring, team-building and inclusive events.

4. Enhance workplace conditions and facilities

- Provide inclusive, safe and hygienic workplace amenities and appropriate PPE for all workers.
- Support worker wellbeing through initiatives through wellbeing-focused committees.
- Ensure communication (e.g. toolbox talks) is accessible to all workers.

5. Expand skills development and workforce access

- Create pathways for workers without formal certifications through training and on-the-job development.
- Invest in structured capability-building and knowledge sharing across teams.

6. Support work-life balance and flexible work

- Introduce flexible work arrangements, including flexible hours and part-time options.
- Promote and normalise access to parental leave for all employees, removing gendered assumptions.
- Support smooth transitions back to work following parental leave.
- Trial alternative working models (e.g. five-day work weeks).

7. Strengthen governance and continuous improvement

- Establish or expand Health and Safety Committees to include wellbeing.
- Regularly review policies (e.g. parental leave, recruitment practices) to ensure fairness and effectiveness.
- Engage proactively with workers to continuously improve workplace practices and outcomes.



Government opportunities

The government opportunities represent a coordinated reform agenda designed to balance ambition with practicality. They leverage government leadership, procurement influence and industry capability to drive lasting cultural change across the sector.

1. Government consider committing to a series of pilot projects to assess the viability and industry impact of the following:
 - a) Voluntary Code of Conduct;
 - b) Culture Standard;
 - c) Maximum five-day/50-hour working week; and
 - d) An integrated study to test and evaluate the combined effectiveness and impacts of all three initiatives together.
2. Government consider reviewing the effectiveness of its current contractual arrangements with suppliers and explore new ways to encourage contractors to demonstrate leadership in diversity, inclusion, and mental health awareness for workforces on high value projects.
3. Government consider current and potential strategies under the existing contracting framework to increase the pool of women (including as apprentices, tradespeople and unskilled workers) on all government projects.

Potential strategies would be commensurate to project size and could include embedding hard targets for women, outreach projects within schools, and apprenticeship scholarships.
4. Subject to pilot outcomes (at point 1), Government consider developing a strategy and implementation plan to embed the Culture Standard across a range of government construction projects, supported by policies and guidance, driven by advocates within the commercial construction sector.
5. Government consider developing a range of guidance, policies and tools to support construction employers to improve their workplace culture and achieve their work health and safety obligations.
6. Government consider strategies to actively strengthen leadership capability, particularly across small and medium enterprises, by designing and delivering targeted training in work health and safety, respectful behaviours and worker wellbeing.
7. Government, supported and informed by industry, consider further opportunities to deliver targeted programs that drive continuous improvement in safety, health and wellbeing across the construction sector.
8. Government consider opportunities for a statewide education and engagement campaign that strengthens industry culture, promotes safe and respectful workplaces, and elevates the value of construction workers, helping to attract new entrants to the industry while fostering pride and retention among the current workforce.

Statement from the BCCC

The BCCC is united in its view that improving workplace culture across the commercial construction industry is both necessary and achievable. While the industry has made progress in many areas, ongoing cultural challenges continue to affect workforce wellbeing, participation, productivity and long term sustainability.

Addressing these challenges will require leadership at all levels, supported by a strong partnership between government, industry and unions. Leaders in the commercial construction sector and government are well positioned to impact positive cultural change on their supply chain.

The BCCC supports the implementation and adoption of a clear and practical culture standard as a way to help industry set consistent expectations, strengthen leadership capability and embed positive workplace behaviours across projects and organisations.

An evidence led approach, trialled through pilot programs and supported by government procurement policy, will allow industry to test, refine and scale initiatives that deliver real benefits on-site and across businesses.

By focusing on leadership capability, behavioural expectations and continuous improvement, these reforms provide an opportunity for the WA construction industry to lift performance, better support workers' safety and wellbeing, attract and retain a diverse workforce, and enhance its reputation as an employer of choice.

The BCCC is committed to working collaboratively with industry participants, unions and government to support the development and rollout of this reform agenda.

Through shared ownership and practical implementation, the industry can strengthen its culture, improve outcomes for workers and businesses, and deliver lasting benefits for the Western Australian community.

BCCC membership

Mr Russell Barnett is the independent Chair of the BCCC.

Mr Steve Catania MLA, Member for Midland, represents the Minister for Industrial Relations.

Other members of the BCCC are:

- Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors Association.
- Built Holdings Pty Ltd.
- CFMEU – Construction and General.
- Electrical Trades Union.
- Lendlease.
- Master Builders Association Western Australia.
- Master Plumbers and Gasfitters Association of WA.
- Multiplex.
- National Electrical and Communications Association.
- Plumbing and Pipe Trades Employees Union.
- Property Council of Australia.
- UnionsWA.
- Construction Training Fund.
- Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.
- Department of Training and Workforce Development.
- Department of Treasury and Finance.
- WorkSafe Commissioner.

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