

CASE STUDY

Metropolitan Roads Program Alliance (MRPA)



**CULTURE IN
CONSTRUCTION**
Time for Life. Wellbeing. Diversity.

Delivery

Multiple Completion Dates

Project Owner

Level Crossing Removal Project

Main Contractor

Fulton Hogan

Current Project Phase

Multi-projects over 4+ years

Contract/Delivery Model

Alliance

Project Overview

The Metropolitan Roads Program Alliance (MRPA) is part of a bigger machine working towards building safer and more liveable communities. Together, amongst five Victorian alliances, we are removing 85 of the state's most dangerous level crossings on behalf of the Victorian Government.

Project Initiative

While our primary focus of works is removing these dangerous level crossings – in parallel, we are also building our capabilities to deliver critical infrastructure that will help improve the liveability of Melbourne's communities.

This includes:

- Building at grade car parks and multi-decks to help improve the access to public transport, going some way to help reduce congestion
- Contributing to greater community connection by integrating more community spaces into project design
- Delivering better road-rail vehicle access



These additional projects will help MRPA build more diverse capabilities and help strengthen our offering to the State Government. This is in line with our vision. However, it is also our strategic objective to exceed expectations, to continue looking for better ways of doing things and inspire the next generation to embrace the wide and varied opportunities in construction.

Culture Initiatives

The Metropolitan Roads Program Alliance (MRPA) supports a diverse and inclusive workforce and recognises that many of its employees require working arrangements that are outside of the traditional work structure and arrangement.

The MRPA Culture and Capability team have developed a flexible working framework to ensure we can continue some form of flexibility post-COVID19.

In the past, initiatives to push a more flexible workplace, or as it's often known as, 'work-life-balance', has fallen flat. This could be largely due to the 'one size fits all' approach and the language used to promote the concept.

Due to the nature of the business and physical requirements of certain roles, finding the balance between time spent at work and home can be difficult. The long, and at times, unpredictable work hours can negatively affect a person's job satisfaction and general wellbeing – reducing efficiencies and derailing the workplace culture.

MRPA recognised pushing a one-size fits all approach wouldn't work, but instead tailoring the perfect workday to an individual and the parameters of their role would find greater success. What this would look like largely depends on the responsibilities of a role, any on-site requirements, team dynamics and that it will not affect efficiencies.

The Alliance acknowledged that a perfect work-life balance probably doesn't exist. However, finding an optimal 'work rhythm', that is, one that fits in with an individual's role and family circumstances, is definitely achievable.

By provided greater flexible working conditions, MRPA employees can now experience those 'extra life moments' that goes with more time with family.

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If the current COVID restrictions have taught us anything it's that flexible working arrangements do work.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced us all to evolve on the fly, with virtual meetings and other online tools becoming the norm, replacing face-to-face communication.

While not ideal in all situations, it has taught us that it can...and does work.

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Approach

Communicating the Flexibility Framework involved a two-stage approach. The first stage included holding group sessions to communicate the framework to senior staff, PMs and those that have larger reporting lines.

The second phase included this same group but was all about supporting them communicate the message to the wider alliance.

Both phases involved face-to-face/Teams meetings with key managers; emails to staff from managers explaining the 'work rhythm' concept and the parameters that employees are entitled to ask for in regards to their work days. In addition, supporting content was uploaded to the MRPA (the Junction) to ensure everyone had access to the information. This included a 'how to' article, FAQs and case studies, a 'how to guide' and supporting content in Pathways (internal magazine).

Key managers were given a communication kit that included:

- The Flexibility Framework
- One page key explainer
- FAQs
- The supporting collateral intended for staff
 - Presentation explainer
 - Two page example featuring how different roles may find their 'work rhythm'
 - Video explainer
 - Posters on site/office

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Introducing flexible working arrangements at MRPA has been positive for both wellbeing and productivity. I've had people tell me that it's the first time since they can remember, of being home in time to enjoy dinner with their family before the kids go to bed.

To me this is what it's all about, giving back those important 'life moments' often lost in a traditional work day.

Dean Riha, Alliance Manager

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Stage 1

Stage 1 consisted of a series of meetings with key managers, including Project Managers and those who have significant reporting lines. This stage was critical in ensuring buy-in from management and provided them with the supporting collateral to guide their discussions with staff.

These meetings outlined the purpose behind the framework, the importance of empowering staff to find the 'work rhythm' that suits them, and the supporting information to help them navigate more flexible working conditions.

The key managers identified to take part in this stage are:

- All Project Managers
- Superintendents
- Managers with direct reports

Stage 2

Stage 2 consisted of a series of communication pieces explaining the framework using the finding your 'work rhythm' message. They explained how to start the conversation with management and where to access the supporting documents.

This information was communicated through numerous channels, including:

- Email
- The Junction
- Pathways
- TVs

Due to COVID restrictions at the time all meetings were held online.

A presentation was also made available to further simplify the framework and explain the key message. The presentation was supported by a two-page example featuring different roles and how flexible working arrangements may work.

In addition, a series of online Teams meetings were held for anyone that wanted to attend, to help explain the context behind the flexibility framework. The meeting was optional with at least three scheduled during the first week. The meetings were hosted by a member of HR in conjunction with the key manager.

All managers were encouraged to make time for one-on-one meetings to discuss each person's requested flexible working options. HR was on hand to support these meetings where relevant (case-by-case basis).

Outcomes and Achievements

Increase in Productivity



Those that have chosen to work flexibly have increased productivity due to greater job satisfaction by reducing travel time and being able to spend more time with their friends and family. By being able to choose the 'work rhythm' that works for them they are happier and have greater balance in their lives.

Greater Job Satisfaction



Choosing a work routine that works for each individual has reduced some of the 'noise' and the pressure of having to physically be in multiple places at once. By adding the option to attend work and meeting online, they now have greater accessibility to not only contribute more but reduced their stress of having to travel.

Staff being able to participate in more 'life moments'



Many who now work remotely have said they are now able to be home for dinner, can drop their kids to school and even attend extra curricular activities. Whereas before, they were juggling travel and the constraints of working off-site.

Increased Wellbeing



With less stress, taking part in more 'life moments' and more job satisfaction people are experiencing a boost in wellbeing.

Statement of Success

One of the positives to come out of COVID-19 is proving that flexibility in the workplace can work and does add value. By choosing to drop the 'work life balance' tag that assumes a one size fits all, we've instead acknowledged that everyone is different. The finding your 'work rhythm' message is more inclusive and provides the support for our people to enjoy more 'life moments'. Productivity has remained high and the feedback is positive overall.

Contact us

For more information or to get involved in shaping the Culture Standard, please contact us: