

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

Diversity and inclusion/wellbeing

In an industry first, Metropolitan Roads Program Alliance teamed up with social procurement business to develop and deliver white night-time PPE tailored specifically for women.

The PPE will not only improve safety by being a better fit for women, it will also help reduce unconscious bias in the construction industry and break down some of the proverbial 'concrete barriers' women face.

Up until now, women could only purchase men's PPE whites and either alter them to fit or just simply making do. If the clothing is ill-fitting, it can potentially cause a safety hazard, and it doesn't say much about the industry's inclusion of women – giving the message women don't belong.

The new range is already proving to be incredibly popular, with the new uniforms in high demand at MRPA and many other LXP alliances reaching out to order their own stocks.

Approach

Even in 2021, PPE in women's sizing is often hard to come by. In mid 2020 female MRPA site engineers experienced this barrier first-hand.

Female engineers working at the Evans Road Level Crossing Removal needed white night shift PPE for sewer cutover works. The men's PPE offered to them was extremely uncomfortable to work in and not only posed a mental barrier at the point of wearing, but posed a safety risk as excess material could catch on the environment.

MRPA sought to purchase white hi-vis clothing for women and discovered there were no Australian companies or distributors that offered the product.

Realising this gap in the market, MRPA engaged with their traffic management company, as well as reaching out to suppliers to gauge interest in the product. It was established that MRPA's primary traffic control sub-contractor had a workforce of 814 casuals of which about 213 are female (approximately 26%) – proving there was a market for the product.

The PPE features a tailored waist, a higher waist band and a closer fit. The product even goes as far as to place the buttons on the left-hand side so that the experience of putting it on feels normal for the wearer.

The Alliance was kept up to date on the product through the design and production stages. This increased buy in as people understood the reasoning behind the product's creation, and why it was important.

The PPE was launched at MRPA in late 2021 and is now being ordered by other projects across the construction industry.



Outcomes and Achievements

Increased female participation in the workforce



This initiative addresses female engagement, inclusion and retention in the industry. By breaking down another barrier for female inclusion in construction, the flow-on effects will be an increasingly engaged female workforce, and eventually this will translate into greater engagement, retention and promotion of women.

MRPA has already seen high levels of engagement internally, and interest from other Alliances and businesses – proving there is a gap to be filled and the PPE was a successful endeavour.

Increased innovation in the safety space



The female hi-vis clothing line has been developed from the ground-up to fill a gap in the market. If you cannot find the item you are after, we must innovate and create the change we want to see in the industry.

It is highly anticipated that once awareness of this initiative reaches the wider industry and remains successful, that other suppliers and manufacturers will follow suit and create their own product. This, coupled with increased awareness through advertising and promotion will lead to a situation whereby female white hi-vis clothing is readily available alongside its male counterpart.

Improved safety on site



Not only was the excess material of unisex PPE ill-fitting, it posed the serious safety risk of catching onto machinery or the surrounding environment. Sometimes millimetres of fabric could be the difference between an incident occurring or not.

Additionally, we know that a workforce that feels appreciated and has a higher level of positive wellbeing will be more attentive on the job and in turn minimise safety risks. The lack of properly fitting clothes acted as a daily reminder for the wearer that the industry has a long way to go in providing basic requirements for women, and could have impacted their approach to safety on site.

Statement of Success

While launched recently, the feedback has been really positive. A Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) industry women's committee - created to 'attract, retain, engage and pitch the exciting opportunities for women in construction - has included the roll-out of the initiative as part of its overarching strategy. Its success has also inspired the development of maternity PPE, currently in its early stages of development. In addition, all alliances under the LXRP banner have committed to purchasing the whites and making them available to all women in their sites.

Contact us

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