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One of the reasons for Australia's high quality of life is the extent of the investment of governments into infrastructure to support our communities. We see feats of engineering and construction in our cities and regions all around us – road and rail networks, tunnelling systems, bridges, water, energy and telecommunications and other built form serving society in health, education, and housing. Hundreds of thousands of people with specialist and general skills contribute to the construction industry, Australia's third largest.

However, infrastructure construction in Australia faces an unprecedented project pipeline – for major projects about \$237bn in the next five years. At the same time, productivity in the industry has not improved for at least 30 years and the shortfall of skilled people needed to build all these projects is 442,000.

One of the key reasons for the massive capacity gap – which of course translates to higher costs and lower productivity - is that the construction industry is not an employer of choice.

Excessive working hours, extremely low gender diversity and a lack of focus on health and wellbeing in construction workplaces are interrelated deterrents for joining the industry. These characteristics are firmly entrenched and self-fulfilling, in construction.

Many people and organisations, over decades, have recognised the industry needs to focus on these issues. Great work has been done by organisations like Mates in Construction - addressing mental health, NAWIC - addressing gender diversity, construction unions and construction firms. Jurisdictions all over the country have taken initiatives - such as Victoria's Building Equality Program. All this has helped inform the work of the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) and the development of the Culture Standard. The Standard provides a broad umbrella for these initiatives.

The CICT is an unusual collaboration - initially between the NSW and Victorian governments and the Australian Constructors' Association and other industry leaders - and now also including as members the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts as well as Infrastructure Australia.

It was set up to create a step change – to try to find a way to achieve the holistic change that is so needed in infrastructure construction, and in the industry more generally. Rather than tackle the deterrent, and in many cases harmful, features of the industry in separate streams, the CICT has established a Standard covering the three key domains – working hours, diversity, and wellbeing and health.

The Standard, being piloted in NSW and Victoria, has been designed to be used as part of the infrastructure procurement process. In this way, governments can use this lever to ensure culture change happens in infrastructure workplaces – not only at first tier contractor level, but through the supply chain. Many of the Standard elements are objectives for improvements set by the proponents



themselves. The Standard on working hours, core to achieving culture change, are more prescriptive. You can find out much more about the Standard itself, the pilot projects, and related initiatives on this site.

The pilot projects are being studied by our academic team of leading workplace researchers. They are focussing on qualitative outcomes but also, importantly, on the productivity impacts of the implementation of the Standard. Our hypothesis is that is that the outcomes of the pilots will provide a solid evidence base for governments to adopt the Standard as part of their procurement policy.

Culture change is beginning to happen for the better – some thanks to the simple realisation that the industry needs to attract people to work in it. Other rethinking is taking place because regulators are addressing risks such as psychosocial safety in workplaces and have imposed a positive duty on company directors to provide safe – and not just physically safe - and respectful workplaces. But the step change is ahead of us.

Beyond the overarching moral and equity imperative, culture change in construction is essential if we are to improve productivity and deliver the projects our communities have the right to expect from their governments.

Our work is not ended. I sincerely thank the thousands who has expressed interest in what we're doing, and the many who are working so tirelessly and with such commitment to support our goals.

Speaking personally, working with the CICT to help improve this industry for its people and for the nation is one of the most significant involvements of my professional life and I know my colleagues feel the same.



Gabrielle Trainor AO
Chair, Construction Industry Culture Taskforce

