CULTURE IN CONSTRUCTION
Time for Life. Wellbeing. Diversity.

A Culture Standard for the Construction Industry

2025



Acknowledgement of Country

The Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) acknowledges that no matter where we are across the country, we are working on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to all First Nations peoples. We acknowledge their ongoing connections to land, sea, sky and waterways and value their rich traditions, storytelling and diverse cultures.



CICT founding partners

The Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) is a collaboration between the Australian Constructors Association, representing the nation's largest construction firms, the governments of Victoria and New South Wales, and Australia's leading workplace researchers.

AUSTRALIAN CONSTRUCTORS ASSOCIATION

NSW GOVERNMENT

VICTORIA State Government

CICT research team

An extensive research program was used to develop the Culture Standard to ensure a robust evidence base for its adoption. The CICT acknowledges the contributions made by the CICT research team led by Distinguished Professor Helen Lingard.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

RMIT UNIVERSITY

Australian National University

SHINe Safety and Health Innovation Network

CICT pilot projects

To strengthen the evidence base for adoption, the Culture Standard was piloted in New South Wales and Victoria, across a range of project and contract types.

The CICT acknowledges the governments of New South Wales and Victoria, and the contractors involved in piloting the Culture Standard.

Health Infrastructure
– Sydney Children's Hospital: Stage 1 and Minderoo Children's Comprehensive Cancer Centre

NSW Department of Education
– Wentworth Point High School

Transport for NSW
– Mulgoa Road Upgrade Project Stage 1

Level Crossing Removal Projects Victoria (LXRP)
– Brunt Road Level Crossing Removal Project

Major Projects Victoria (MRPV)
– Narre Warren Cranbourne Road Upgrade

Construction Industry Culture Taskforce members

The CICT acknowledges the contributions of Taskforce members in developing the Culture Standard and demonstrating their commitment to the construction industry in Australia.

- **Australian Constructors Association**
- **Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union**
- **Department of Infrastructure and Transport, South Australia**
- **Department of Treasury and Finance Victoria**
- **Department to of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts**
- **Development Victoria**
- **NSW Department of Education**
- **Exner Group**
- **Greatness Consulting**
- **Health Infrastructure**
- **Industrial Relations Victoria**
- **Infrastructure Australia**
- **Infrastructure Canberra**
- **Infrastructure NSW**
- **John Holland Group**
- **Laing O'Rourke Australia**
- **Lendlease Construction**
- **Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads**
- **RMIT University**
- **Roberts Co**
- **Transport for NSW**
- **Treasury NSW**
- **Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA)**
- **Western Australia Construction Training Fund**
- **Western Australia Department of Finance**

Contents

The Culture Standard for the Construction Industry 7

Foreword 8

Introduction to the Culture Standard 10

About the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce 10

The social and economic significance of the construction industry 10

A snapshot of challenges facing the construction industry 11

Developing the Culture Standard 12

Implementing the Culture Standard 13

Key definitions 14

Organisational responsibilities when implementing the Culture Standard 14

A note on diversity 15

The Culture Standard for the Construction Industry 16

Culture Standard Pillar 1: Wellbeing 17

1.1 The construction industry supports the mental health of its people 18

1.2 Worker wellbeing is prioritised when setting the project schedule 20

Culture Standard Pillar 2: Time for life 21

2.1 Construction workers work 5 days in 7 22

2.2 All construction industry workers have access to flexible work options 24

Culture Standard Pillar 3: Inclusion and diversity 25

3.1 The construction industry provides an inclusive work environment 27

3.2 The construction industry is free from offensive material and language 28

3.3 The construction industry provides amenities to support a diverse workforce 29

3.4 Women are represented in the construction industry 30

3.5 Women hold leadership positions in the construction industry 31

3.6 The construction industry will close gender pay gaps 33

3.7 The construction industry employs people without bias 34

The Culture Standard for the Construction Industry

The Culture Standard provides a framework for clients and contractors to work together to address significant challenges facing the construction industry. The Culture Standard includes 3 interrelated pillars (wellbeing, time for life, and inclusion and diversity), with each pillar containing requirements designed to enhance culture in the construction sector.



Inclusive Workplaces

- Self-assess current practices against the Culture Maturity Scorecard and develop a plan for improvement
- No pornography or offensive material
- Ensuring appropriate amenities are provided

Targeting Diversity

- Set targets for the appointment of women and develop a plan to achieve these
- Create and implement professional standards for interviewing, shortlisting and selection of candidates

Remuneration

- Identify and disclose gender pay gaps across job roles
- Develop and implement a plan to close gender pay gaps

Mental health

- Put programs in place to identify and prevent mental health illnesses and support good mental health in a stigma free space
- Schedule programs and their frequency to enable effective workforce participation
- Ensure mental health first aiders are available

Healthy programming

In the project schedule:

- Consider health risk mitigations
- Manage workload pressures
- Ensure sufficient recovery opportunities

Flexibility

- Develop and implement a flexibility plan for the project

Work periods

- All workers work 5 days in 7, ideally Monday to Friday with access to two consecutive days off
- Target that all workers work ≤50 hr/wk
- Ensure that no workers work >55 hr/wk

This requirement applies to individual workers only. Project operation schedule is not restricted to 5 days

Foreword

The Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) was established in 2018, forming a unique collaboration between the Australian Constructors Association, the governments of New South Wales and Victoria, others in the industry and Australia's leading construction workplace researchers.

Our genesis was in the Construction Industry Leadership Forum (CILF), which brought together government and industry to share knowledge and collaborate to resolve the interwoven issues facing the Australian construction sector – commercial and contractual issues, capability and capacity constraints, and industry culture. The CICT was established to focus on the latter set of challenges – that is, how to transform the workplace culture of the construction industry.

We commissioned initial research that identified significant cultural issues holding back the sector's productivity and performance, including excessive work hours and fatigue, mental ill-health, low levels of wellbeing and a failure to attract a diverse workforce. Our report by BIS Oxford Economics found these cultural issues cost the Australian economy around $8 billion annually. The construction industry's performance in these areas is among the poorest of any industry in Australia, and it's no coincidence that industry productivity is also significantly lower than most other sectors.[1]

Clearly, a step change is needed. To help achieve the required change, the CICT developed the Culture Standard for the Construction Industry, designed to become part of the procurement process for government infrastructure works and support client agencies, contractors, unions and the supply chain to work together to transform construction workplaces.

The Culture Standard provides a framework through which all parties can work in partnership to drive change across 3 key areas of industry culture: wellbeing, time for life, and inclusion and diversity. When incorporated into procurement, the Culture Standard provides a level playing field for contractors and government clients to buy in, project by project – thereby creating better, safer and more equitable work environments and supporting construction to become an industry of choice.

An important aspect of our CICT work has been the adoption of an evidence-based approach. We have drawn on existing data and undertaken comprehensive new research to investigate the impact of the Culture Standard when applied on the ground. Our research program, led by Distinguished Professor Helen Lingard, has tracked the Culture Standard's implementation on 5 pilot projects, developed a cost–benefit analysis and engaged with key decision-makers across industry.

The CICT acknowledges the governments of New South Wales and Victoria, and the contractors involved in piloting the Culture Standard.

The 5 pilot projects provided extensive data sets and expressions of overwhelming support for the Culture Standard, demonstrating that a shift towards a more balanced and inclusive industry is not only necessary, but is achievable, productive and desired by workers and their families. Our research shows that implementing the Culture Standard yields benefits for contractors, the supply chain and clients.

Results from the pilot projects demonstrated strong support for a 5-day work week, with 93% of salaried respondents and 71% of waged respondents favouring this schedule. Changes to the work week did not adversely affect site productivity, challenging the industry's long-held belief that longer hours equate to more output.

Instead, they have highlighted the benefits of a rested, respectful and diverse workforce – including improved safety, industry attractiveness and job satisfaction. This approach aligns with the CICT's broader goals to foster a culture that values wellbeing, diversity and sustainability alongside productivity and efficiency. In the face of acute labour shortages, this approach improves the industry's attractiveness to workers.

Foreword (Cont.)

The journey towards cultural transformation is not without challenges. It requires a collective effort from all stakeholders, including government, industry leaders and workers themselves. The collaborative nature of the CICT exemplifies the kind of multi-faceted approach needed to drive meaningful change. Successful cultural change across the sector requires the widespread adoption of the Culture Standard, ensuring that actions to implement principles of inclusion, wellbeing and time for life become part of the industry's fabric.

Since establishing the Taskforce, we have welcomed other state and territory jurisdictions who have joined our work. Sceptics have become converts and momentum is strong. The Culture Standard works.

Based on the demonstrated success of our pilot projects, more projects are now applying the Culture Standard in procurement, including Canberra Theatre Redevelopment, Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2 and the Melbourne Arts Precinct. It is also being supported by the Commonwealth in its Land Transport Funding Agreements with the states and territories. We have good reasons to think this groundswell will continue.

There will always be more to do, and improving workplace culture cannot solve all the challenges facing the industry. But the Culture Standard provides an essential and significant head start. It is a fundamental effort to reposition one of Australia's largest industries and make it more productive. Our quality of life depends on the construction industry and its culture.

I thank those who have committed extraordinary energy and expertise to developing and implementing the Culture Standard, especially the contractors, subcontractors, unions, client agencies and researchers involved in the pilot projects.

And, of course, I thank the New South Wales and Victorian governments, the Australian Constructors Association and all the representatives around the Taskforce table from 2018 for their vision and unwavering support.

Gabrielle Trainor AO
Chair
Construction Industry Culture Taskforce

[1]Crook, D., & Tessler, A. 2021. *The Cost of Doing Nothing Report.* BIS Oxford Economics for the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce. https://www.constructionindustryculturetaskforce.com.au/publication/culture-standard-research-title/



Introduction to the Culture Standard



The Culture Standard provides a framework for clients and contractors to work together to address significant challenges facing the construction industry.

The Culture Standard seeks to leverage procurement processes to transform the industry's capacity and effectiveness and improve the lives of its workers. It is a key step in securing the industry's sustainability and ability to deliver the projects needed to shape Australia's future.

About the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce

The Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) is a collaboration between the Australian Constructors Association, the governments of Victoria and New South Wales, leaders from industry and construction workplace researchers. It was established in August 2018 as an outcome of the Construction Industry Leadership Forum. Over time, the CICT membership expanded to include broader national representation.

The CICT focused its efforts on developing the Culture Standard for the Construction Industry to lift productivity and performance and address major cultural issues impacting the industry – including excessive work hours and fatigue, poor mental health, and the failure to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

The Culture Standard seeks to create a construction industry where:

- Everyone has a place and feels valued
- Wellbeing is prioritised across all job roles
- Everyone has access to flexible work options and caps on working hours so they have time for life.

The social and economic significance of the construction industry

The construction industry is a significant driver of economic activity in Australia and directly employs over one million people (around 10% of the total workforce).

The construction supply chain is complex and strongly interrelated, encompassing manufacturing (materials, equipment components), services (engineering, design, surveying, consulting) and traditional construction trades.

While the Culture Standard was being developed, the pipeline of public sector construction projects remained at record highs in several Australian jurisdictions. This work includes large road and rail projects, social infrastructure projects, and power and water utilities. This unprecedented pipeline of projects and high levels of infrastructure investment have increased the pressure of work practices. Contractors' continued ability to deliver these projects depends on the industry attracting new workers and sustaining a healthy and productive workforce.

Introduction to the Culture Standard (Cont.)

A snapshot of challenges facing the construction industry

The construction industry creates the communities, workplaces, homes and infrastructure vital for long-term economic growth. The industry is known to push boundaries, develop innovative solutions to problems and produce projects that define the way Australians work, live and connect. The industry's achievements are tangible. They define the skylines of our cities and the reach of our transport network. However, the industry experiences challenges that must be addressed for it to continue delivering the projects that will define Australia's future.

The Culture Standard has been developed at a time when the construction industry is under immense pressure and is not viewed as an employer of choice. The industry faces significant skill gaps, which are projected to increase as the current project pipeline advances. Industry productivity is stagnant. The workforce experiences disproportionate wellbeing issues compared to broader society and severely low levels of diversity when compared to other industries. These problems impact the industry's ability to deliver work efficiently and effectively, and its ability to attract and a retain a healthy, well and diverse workforce.

Long working hours

64% report working >50 hours per week

59% unsatisfied with work life balance

14% construction industry employees experience presenteeism

Lack of diversity

#1 most male-dominated industry

12% of the workforce is female

<2% of on-site roles occupied by women

Poor wellbeing

2x suicide rate vs national average

75% report moderate to high stress levels

46% experiencing burn-out

Figure 1: A snapshot of construction industry statistics and challenges facing the construction industry at the time of Culture Standard development



Introduction to the Culture Standard (Cont.)

The construction industry experiences structural inhibitors to culture change, including the current definition of value for money, which focuses on time and cost above social factors such as industry sustainability and worker wellbeing.

The CICT aims to addresses 3 critical challenges facing Australia's construction industry:

- **Long working hours:** Industry working hours are excessive, resulting in high turnover, absenteeism and stress-related leave
- **Lack of diversity:** Failure to attract and retain a diverse range of people narrows the industry's talent pool and reduces its capacity to deliver projects
- **Wellbeing:** Stress levels and suicide rates among construction workers are double the national average.

Our work with BIS Oxford Economics, *The Cost of Doing Nothing Report,* demonstrates that urgent change is needed to address cultural issues in the construction industry that cost the economy close to $8 billion annually due to workplace injuries, mental illness, suicide, long work hours and a lack of diversity.

The Culture Standard provides a framework to support a partnership between clients and contractors to drive change in 3 key areas of industry culture: wellbeing, time for life, and inclusion and diversity.

Developing the Culture Standard

The Culture Standard was developed through consultation and research, as outlined in Figure 2.

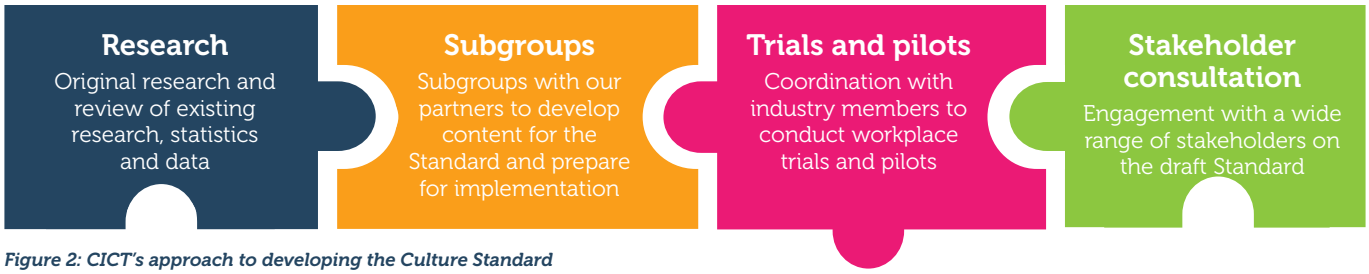


Figure 2: CICT's approach to developing the Culture Standard

Research program

The Culture Standard is a world-leading initiative, developed through rigorous research designed to understand the industry's response and measure the Culture Standard's impact. Researchers from RMIT University, The University of Melbourne, The University of Sydney and The Australian National University were engaged to lead this work for the CICT.

The Culture Standard was piloted on 5 projects across New South Wales and Victoria, encompassing a range of projects and contract types (see Figure 3). The pilot projects were designed to assess the impact on productivity, capacity and retention of key Culture Standard principles, including reduced work hours, flexibility, access to mental health support, a focus on wellness and leadership training.



Figure 3: Culture Standard pilot projects

Introduction to the Culture Standard (Cont.)

Between November 2022 and May 2024, CICT researchers conducted surveys and interviews at the 5 pilot project sites. They collected data on multiple occasions and engaged with a diverse range of workers.

Frontier Economics was engaged to analyse the costs and benefits of implementing the draft Culture Standard on the 5 pilot projects. The Frontier Economics team analysed whether and how the Culture Standard affected productivity and created other benefits or costs for workers, the industry and society more broadly.

In addition to the pilot project research, the CICT conducted a 2-stage qualitative evaluation with key decision-makers and industry leaders to gain their perspectives on the Culture Standard. This research involved government representatives, employers, industry associations and union representatives.

The *Culture in Construction Final Report* collates findings from our research and analysis. Pleasingly, the report highlights overwhelming support for the Culture Standard and associated benefits – including improved retention, no adverse impacts on project time and costs, improved productivity and higher female participation.

Stakeholder engagement and industry consultation

Developing the Culture Standard involved ongoing consultation with key stakeholders and industry representatives.

In October 2021, the CICT released *A Culture Standard for the Construction Industry Consultation Paper* to industry stakeholders. Between 17 October 2021 and 10 January 2022, the CICT undertook its first round of public consultation with construction workers and organisations throughout Australia. The consultation was designed to gain insight into initial perceptions and attitudes towards the proposed Culture Standard.

After the pilot projects were implemented, the CICT conducted a second round of public consultation (between 27 January and 21 February 2025). In this consultation, we requested feedback on the updated draft Culture Standard and implementation resources. We asked participants to consider whether the Culture Standard's requirements were clearly expressed, with sufficient guidance information and implementation resources.

Implementing the Culture Standard

The CICT's goal is for the Culture Standard to be implemented on public sector projects in each Australian jurisdiction, via infrastructure procurement processes. This will involve:

1. Clients prioritising implementation of the Culture Standard early in the project lifecycle and highlighting this as part of the request for tenders
2. Contractors demonstrating how they will achieve the Culture Standard requirements to the client as part of their tender
3. Clients evaluating a contractor's approach to the Culture Standard as part of shortlisting and tenderer section
4. Clients and contractors working together across project delivery and handover to ensure compliance with the Culture Standard objectives committed to in the tender.

Key to successful implementation will be continued collaboration between clients, contractors and the project workforce.

With the exception of work-hour caps, the Culture Standard is designed to be non-prescriptive. This ensures Australian jurisdictions can adopt the Culture Standard alongside existing requirements and well-established procurement practices. Importantly, the Culture Standard is designed to be delivered in harmony with aligned policies and regulations that form part of existing procurement processes.

Introduction to the Culture Standard (Cont.)

The CICT established a working group to develop implementation resources to support effective adoption of the Culture Standard. The working group brought together subject matter experts and industry representatives to develop resources on behalf of the CICT. The suite of implementation resources is designed to support organisations in all aspects of implementing the Culture Standard.

Key definitions

Different parts of the construction industry use key terms in different ways. In the Culture Standard, we adopt the following definitions:

Client: An entity that procures construction works and has adopted the Culture Standard in its procurement processes.

Head contractor: An entity that provides construction services and has been engaged to deliver a project. It holds the head contract and is responsible for the engaging and managing the project supply chain.

Organisation: An entity delivering the requirements of the Culture Standard. The Culture Standard applies to organisations involved in project delivery, including both head contractor and subcontractors.

Subcontractor: An entity engaged by the head contractor to provide goods or services related to project delivery. This definition encompasses both design and trade subcontractors.

Workforce: The individual workers engaged to deliver a project and perform tasks directly related to project delivery. This definition encompasses workers employed by the contractor and subcontractors and includes all occupations (blue and white collar) and employment structures (waged and salaried).

Organisational responsibilities when implementing the Culture Standard

Successfully implementing the Culture Standard requires ongoing collaboration between clients, contractors and the workforce across all phases of a project's lifecycle.

Client responsibilities:

- Clearly define requirements, priorities and expectations related to the Culture Standard at the time of tender to allow contractors to plan and respond accordingly
- Consider implementation approaches that avoid duplication in activity (particularly at time of tender and for project reporting)
- Collaborate with head contractors to ensure the intent of the Culture Standard is understood and upheld throughout project delivery and to manage competing priorities and conflicts.

Introduction to the Culture Standard (Cont.)

Head contractor responsibilities:

- Define approaches for meeting Culture Standard requirements at the time of tender
- Deliver on Culture Standard requirements during project delivery
- Fulfil reporting obligations as specified within the Culture Standard and/or as agreed with the client
- Consult regularly with the workforce on approaches to delivering on Culture Standard requirements; provide opportunities for the workforce to provide feedback
- Support and set expectations for subcontractors to deliver on project-level requirements of the Culture Standard
- Collaborate with clients to ensure the Culture Standard's intent is understood and upheld throughout project delivery and that competing priorities and conflicts are appropriately managed.

Each pillar of the Culture Standard outlines whether it applies at the project level or head contractor level.

- Where the Culture Standard is applied at the project level, both contractors and subcontractors should support its delivery. The head contractor provides aggregated reporting to the client.
- Where the Culture Standard is applied at the head contractor level, its requirements apply at a corporate or whole-of-organisational level.

A note on diversity

Developing a more inclusive society is a clear priority for most Australians. Creating opportunities for more diverse participation is an objective for many industries, including construction.

In discussing diversity, the Culture Standard deliberately focuses on gender, as a first step in improving diversity. By embracing diversity and increasing the participation of women, the Culture Standard aims to create a more inclusive sector, address widespread labour and skills shortages, and address the persistent underrepresentation of women in the industry. Evidence shows that employing women in positions of influence can lead the way in championing greater diversity, equity and inclusion in industries – in ways far beyond gender diversity.[2]

[2]See, for example, McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2024*. https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace



The Culture Standard

The Culture Standard provides a framework for procuring organisations and contractors to work together to address significant challenges facing the construction industry. The Culture Standard includes 3 interrelated pillars (wellbeing, time for life, and inclusion and diversity). Each pillar contains requirements that aim to enhance culture in the construction sector.



Culture Standard Pillar 1: Wellbeing

The wellbeing of people employed in the construction industry must be a key priority for governments and industry stakeholders. Currently, the construction industry shouts safety but whispers health, resulting in negative impacts on worker wellbeing. Prioritising wellbeing on a project requires a holistic approach and, if managed appropriately, will improve productivity, attractiveness and retention.

All employers have responsibilities and obligations in relation to health and safety in the workplace. The Culture Standard aligns with legislation and regulation that seeks to protect worker mental health, psychosocial health and wellbeing, and prevent health risks and injuries. This includes aligning with:

- Work health and safety regulation and psychosocial regulations
- Right to disconnect legislation
- Respect at work legislation.

The Culture Standard does not seek to duplicate existing legislative and regulatory requirements and should not be relied on as a compliance tool. While it is aligned in intent, the Culture Standard does not encompass the full scope of legislative and regulatory requirements linked to mental health and wellbeing.

The wellbeing pillar of the Culture Standard places requirements on clients and contractors across 2 areas: mental health and project schedule.



Mental Health

The construction industry has some of the highest rates of mental ill-health (including suicide) across all industries in Australia. This has a profound impact on individuals, families and communities, and creates a large economic and resource drain on society more broadly.



Project Schedule

Current measures of successful project delivery include time (delivering the project on schedule) and cost (delivering the project on budget). These success measures affect the people working in the construction industry, who are often required to work harder or longer hours to meet established timeframes and budgets. This has significant health ramifications for workers and reduces the industry's ability to attract and retain its workforce.

The goals of the wellbeing component of the Culture Standard are:

1.1 The construction industry supports the mental health of its people

1.2 Worker wellbeing is prioritised when setting the project schedule.

1.1 The construction industry supports the mental health of its people

Requirement	Organisations will support the mental health of their workforce by: • Having programs in place to identify and prevent mental ill-health and support good mental health in a stigma-free space (such as suicide awareness and prevention programs, resilience training and leadership development) • Scheduling and promoting these programs to enable effective workforce participation • Ensuring mental health first aiders and peer-to-peer trained support workers are available to workers on the project.
Application	These requirements are applied at the project level.
Action to be taken	**Project tender phase** Tendering organisations will outline to the client as part of their tender documentation the program/s they will have in place to support mental health and the provision of mental health first aiders on the project. **Project delivery phase** Organisations will implement program/s and ensure program/s are accessible to those working on the project to: • Identify and prevent mental ill-health • Support good mental health. Organisations will communicate and promote program/s and provide an environment where they can be accessed in a stigma-free way. Organisations will ensure that trained mental health first aiders and peer-to-peer support workers are always available to people on site. Organisations will assess the effectiveness of the program/s and report on this at least every 6 months (e.g., participation numbers and participant feedback).
Why this is important	Construction industry workers experience high levels of mental ill-health – among the highest of all industries in Australia. Mental ill-health can have profound impacts on individuals, their families and their communities. It directly impacts employee productivity. Implementing programs that support workers' mental health will help to identify and address existing mental health issues and support prevention. In addition to the social benefits associated with improved mental health, this will result in a more engaged and productive workforce, and industry-wide improvements in attraction, retention and diversity. Mental health first aiders provide a point of contact for those suffering from mental health issues and facilitate access to support programs. This helps to destigmatise discussions about mental health in the workplace. Measuring the effectiveness of mental health programs (including monitoring lead and lag indicators) assists organisations in supporting worker wellbeing and providing effective and productive programs.
Intended benefits	• Increased utilisation of mental health programs • Support for mental health conditions • Reduced suicide • Increased productivity • Improved safety and quality • Improved project diversity • Improved attraction and retention • Reduced stress and burn out • Social benefits (impacts to people, families and community) • Improved social relationships • Reduced costs associated with mental ill-health

1.1 The construction industry supports the mental health of its people	
Financial implications	Organisations may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time and cost to plan, develop and report on mental health programs • Time and cost of training mental health first aiders and peer-to-peer support workers • Time and cost to implement and promote mental health programs • Supervision and leadership time and cost to support implementation and accessibility.
Performance measurement	**Project delivery phase** • Organisations report on program delivery and workforce attendance in programs • Workforce surveys to test implementation **Project completion phase** • Organisations evaluate the programs delivered, including utilisation of mental health first aiders
Behavioural outcomes	• Increased utilisation of mental health programs • People talk about mental health openly • People report improved mental health and wellbeing • People report feeling supported in the workplace • Increased worker productivity • People apply to work in the industry • People choose to stay in the industry



1.2 Worker wellbeing is prioritised when setting the project schedule

Requirement	Organisations will develop a project schedule that supports the health of the project workforce by: • Considering health risk mitigations when setting the project schedule • Effectively managing workload pressures through the project schedule • Ensuring sufficient recovery opportunities through the project schedule.
Application	This requirement applies at the project level.
Action to be taken	**Project tender phase** Tendering organisations will demonstrate how their proposed project schedule supports the wellbeing of workers. **Project delivery phase** Organisations will maintain a project schedule that prioritises workforce wellbeing by considering health risk mitigations (including fatigue, recovery, mental health and physical health) and effectively managing workload pressures.
Why this is important	Considering project workload pressures and health risks as part of project programming will drive health and wellbeing outcomes by ensuring that delivery timeframes consider workforce wellbeing, provide sufficient rest and recovery opportunities, and avoid excessive work hours. This will support the productivity of the industry by: • Improving workforce engagement • Improving attraction and retention • Reducing the resources required to support people experiencing health conditions affected by project schedule pressure.
Intended benefits	• Improved mental and physical health • Improved worker productivity • Decreased fatigue and burn out • Improved safety and quality • Improved attraction and retention • Improved client and contractor relationships • Reduced stress levels • Increased diversity
Financial implications	Organisations may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time and cost in developing the project schedule • Supervision/leadership time and cost to implement the requirement.
Performance measurement	**Project delivery phase** • Project schedule discussions address health risk mitigations and workload pressure management in meetings with clients • Workforce surveys to test implementation
Behavioural outcomes	• Decreased absences • People apply to work in the industry • People choose to stay in the industry

Culture Standard Pillar 2: Time for life

People working in the construction industry need adequate time to rest and pursue life activities outside work. Achieving this is necessary for the ongoing sustainability of the industry and to support the wellbeing of the workforce, their families and their communities.

When workers do not have sufficient time away from work, project outcomes are likely to be affected through reduced productivity, quality of work and safety. Excessive working hours reinforce beliefs that the industry is an unattractive place to work and does not provide opportunities for diverse participation.

The time for life component of the Culture Standard places requirements on clients and contractors across 2 areas: work periods and flexibility.



Work Periods

Many construction sites operate 6–7 days per week to meet delivery timeframes and because this is the industry norm. This creates a situation where project workers typically work more than 5 days per week, often with extended hours. This leads to fatigue, burn out, mental and physical health impacts, and relationship disruption.

Even where there is no compelling reason to minimise disruption, most construction industry projects are not scheduled to provide workers with adequate rest. In projects that require weekend work (e.g., critical rail or road infrastructure projects), this issue can be exacerbated.



Flexibility

Construction industry workers find it difficult to make time for themselves or undertake basic activities (such as attending personal appointments or caring for children or loved ones). Being unable to balance work with other life activities has health and wellbeing ramifications and can cause stress, relationship issues and reduced productivity.

The goals of the time for life component of the Culture Standard are:

2.1 Construction workers work 5 days in 7, no more than 50 hours per week and have access to 2 consecutive days rest each week

2.2 All construction industry workers have access to flexible work options.

Leadership

Achieving these goals requires leadership from both clients and contractors, with different primary ownership at different project phases:

- **Business case development and project inception:** Client ownership
- **Tender development:** Head contractor ownership
- **Tender assessment:** Client ownership
- **Project delivery:** Head contractor ownership
- **Project handover:** Client ownership.

The behavioural expectations for the leaders indicated above include:

- Commitment from the client, contractor and key project leadership to deliver the Culture Standard requirements
- Communicating the requirements and advocating for their delivery
- Ensuring priority is placed on delivering the requirements at all stages of the project
- Proactively supporting implementation
- Seeking awareness and greater understanding of relevant issues
- Ensuring appropriate resources support delivery
- Setting the right culture to enable the workforce to adopt flexibility
- Celebrating or rewarding those providing a flexible work environment.

2.1 Construction workers work 5 days in 7

Requirement	All workers work 5 days in 7, with access to 2 consecutive days of rest and no more than 50 hours of work per week. Individual workers should ideally work Monday to Friday, providing access to weekend days that are typically conducive to time for life pursuits. While projects adopting the Culture Standard may operate beyond 5 days per week (i.e., 24/7) organisations will: • Ensure all workers work 5 days in 7 with access to 2 consecutive days of rest • Target that all workers work ≤50 hours per week • Ensure that no workers work >55 hours per week. Ideally, projects will be scheduled with a Monday to Friday operational period.
Application	This requirement applies at the project level.
Action to be taken	**Project tender phase** Tendering organisations will develop and submit a project schedule that adheres to a 5-in-7 work week for individual workers. The project schedule will target that all workers work 50 hours per week. Where this is not achievable, the organisation will ensure that no one works over 55 hours per week. **Project delivery phase** Organisations will implement the agreed project schedule and report project workforce compliance to the client throughout delivery.
Why this is important	A 5-in-7 approach that gives workers access to 2 consecutive days of rest, ideally on Saturday and Sunday, enables all workers to have an opportunity to rest and recover appropriately during project delivery. Providing this rest period will enable workers to participate in social, community and family activities. This supports wellbeing through improved mental and physical health outcomes. Organisations will benefit from improvements in productivity attributable to a rested workforce, with corresponding impacts on safety and quality.
Intended benefits	• Improved work–life balance • Reduced fatigue • Improved mental and physical health and wellbeing • Improved safety and quality • Improved project diversity • Improved attraction and retention • Lower stress • Increased productivity • Improved social relationships and increased shared parenting and caring opportunities

2.1 Construction workers work 5 days in 7

Financial implications	Organisations may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time required to plan, monitor and report on compliance • Supervision costs to ensure implementation and compliance • Cultural change training and support for team leaders and teams • Potential additional workforce to provide backfilling resources • Increases in capital expenditure where plant or equipment is required for longer periods.
Performance measurement	**Project delivery phase** • Organisations report on project workforce compliance with time for life requirements and work hours • Workforce surveys to test implementation **Project completion phase** • Project schedule summary reporting
Behavioural outcomes	• People apply to work in the industry • People choose to stay in the industry • Increased productivity and workforce engagement • Improved diversity • People report improved health and wellbeing • People prefer to work on projects where this requirement is in place



2.2 All construction industry workers have access to flexible work options

Requirement	Organisations will develop a project flexibility plan outlining how the project will support and promote flexibility for all workers.
Application	This requirement applies at the project level.
Action to be taken	**Project tender phase** Tendering organisations will develop and submit a project flexibility plan outlining how flexible work practices will be supported, promoted and implemented on the project. **Project delivery phase** Organisations will implement the flexibility plan, monitor results and ensure it is communicated to workers. Organisations will report to the client against the plan in client meetings.
Why this is important	Providing flexible work options will allow the industry to recruit people who would otherwise not consider a career in construction. Improved flexibility options will also encourage the existing workforce to stay in the industry. Improvements in attraction and retention will help to address capability and capacity constraints by keeping skills and knowledge in the industry and bringing new talent to the sector. Flexible work options contribute to a work environment that supports health and wellbeing outcomes, reduces stress and fatigue, and improves productivity and engagement.
Intended benefits	• Improved attraction and retention • Improved diversity • Improved mental and physical health and wellbeing • Reduced stress • Increased productivity • Decreased safety incidents attributable to fatigue and/or distraction
Financial implications	Organisations may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time to plan, monitor and report • Supervision to ensure implementation and compliance • Increase in project preliminary costs and overheads • Cultural change training and support for team leaders and teams • Potential IT costs if additional or new systems are required to manage flexibility • Potential additional workforce to provide backfilling of resources • Consequence and performance management where the plan is not implemented effectively.
Performance measurement	**Project delivery phase** Organisations monitor and report on the implementation of the project flexibility plan, including the number of roles working flexibly and uptake. Organisations survey workers to determine: • Worker knowledge of the flexibility plan • Worker uptake of flexible work options • Worker concerns about repercussions or stigma for using flexible work options.
Behavioural outcomes	• People work in a range of ways • People prioritise health and wellbeing • Managers have flexibility conversations with their teams • No negative banter or shaming around presenteeism (including flexibility and hours of work) • People return to work after having children • People apply to work in the industry • People choose to stay in the industry • People report improved health and wellbeing • Meetings are scheduled to consider flexibility

Culture Standard Pillar 3: Inclusion and diversity

The Australian construction industry faces difficulty attracting and retaining a diverse range of people, especially women. This affects productivity and the industry's capability and capacity to deliver projects.

The construction industry work environment can be challenging, further deterring those considering it as a career. To support a viable and inclusive industry, the Culture Standard focuses on implementing changes to address the obstacles to diversity.

The diversity component of the Culture Standard places requirements on clients and contractors in 3 areas: targeting diversity, inclusive workplaces and remuneration.



Targeting Diversity

The construction industry is one of the lowest-ranked industries in Australia for female representation in the workforce. The representation of women in roles involving strategic decision-making and leadership is particularly low. This lack of visibility of female leadership negatively affects women's perceptions of construction as an industry where they can pursue a successful career.



Inclusive Workplaces

The construction industry has made significant progress in improving the inclusivity of its workplaces, including through reducing the presence of offensive material in the workplace and providing adequate amenities to support a diverse workforce. However, inclusivity is still an issue that obstructs diversity, attraction and retention of the workforce as well as community perceptions of the industry.



Remuneration

Women are not attracted to the construction industry for many reasons, one of which is the disparity in their pay when compared to their male colleagues.

The goals of the inclusion and diversity pillar of the Culture Standard are:

3.1 The construction industry provides an inclusive work environment

3.2 The construction industry is free from offensive material and language

3.3 The construction industry provides amenities to support a diverse workforce

3.4 Women are represented in the construction industry

3.5 Women hold leadership positions in the construction industry

3.6 The construction industry will close gender pay gaps

3.7 The construction industry employs people without bias.

Culture Standard Pillar 3: Inclusion and diversity (Cont.)

Leadership

Achieving these goals requires leadership from both clients and contractors, with different primary ownership at different project phases:

- **Business case development and project inception:** Client ownership
- **Tender development:** Head contractor ownership
- **Tender assessment:** Client ownership
- **Project delivery:** Contractor ownership
- **Project handover:** Client ownership.

The behavioural expectations for the leaders indicated above include:

- Commitment from the client, contractor and project leader to deliver the Culture Standard requirements
- Communicating the requirements and advocating for their delivery
- Ensuring priority is placed on delivering the requirements at all project stages
- Proactively supporting the implementation of the requirements
- Seeking awareness and greater understanding of the issues
- Ensuring appropriate resources are provided to support delivery
- Providing resources to ensure delivery against the requirements.



3.1 The construction industry provides an inclusive work environment

Requirement	Organisations will provide workplaces that enable inclusive participation by a diverse workforce, especially women, through self-assessing their current practices on the Culture Maturity Scorecard and developing a plan for achieving improvement on the project. Organisations will be required to show evidence to support their results.
Application	The Culture Maturity Scorecard assessment is undertaken by the head contractor. Head contractors develop a project-level plan for providing an inclusive work environment. This plan should include the approach for implementing workplace policies and practices that support inclusive, safe and respectful workplaces.
Action to be taken	**Project tender phase** Tendering organisations will self-assess their organisation-wide performance using the Culture Maturity Scorecard. Organisations will report their current ranking and provide supporting evidence to the client during the tender stage. Organisations will plan to improve their rank on the culture continuum through the project. **Project delivery phase** Organisations will report to the client on their progress. **Project completion phase** Organisations will provide a final report on progress.
Why this is important	An inclusive workplace supports the participation of all people, regardless of age, gender, culture, sexual orientation and background. Attracting more women to participate in the workforce will boost national productivity and benefit workplace culture. Inclusive work environments ensure that people feel valued and supported to pursue productive and lengthy careers. Providing inclusive workplaces will improve the attraction, retention and diversity of the industry, which will also assist in addressing capability and capacity constraints. Creating more inclusive work environments will also contribute to improved health outcomes for people working in the construction industry (including both mental and physical health).
Intended benefits	• Improved attraction and retention • Improved diversity • Improved mental and physical health and wellbeing • Lower stress in the workforce • Increased productivity
Financial implications	Organisations may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time to understand and conduct the Culture Maturity Scorecard • Time to monitor and report on the Culture Maturity Scorecard • Time and cost to plan improvements against the Culture Maturity Scorecard • Financial costs of implementing the plan to achieve the project's target ranking • Time from leaders to promote and support delivery of the requirement.
Performance measurement	**Project delivery phase** • Organisations report on progress against plans • Workforce surveys to test implementation
Behavioural outcomes	• Workers return to work after having children • People apply to work in the industry • Workers choose to stay in the industry • Improved diversity • Workers report improved health and wellbeing

3.2 The construction industry is free from offensive material and language

Requirement	Organisations will provide workplaces that enable inclusive participation through ensuring there is no pornographic or offensive material in the workplace.
Application	This requirement applies at the project level.
Action to be taken	**Project tender phase** Tendering organisations will outline their process for ensuring the project is free from offensive material, including processes for workers to report the presence of offensive material in a stigma-free way and the timely removal of offensive material. **Project delivery phase** Organisations will ensure the project is free from offensive material.
Why this is important	All people working in the construction industry should be supported to feel comfortable and included in their work environment. Removing offensive material from the workplace in a suitable timeframe will support a diverse workforce that views the industry in a positive light and as a place they can build a career. Removing offensive material from workplaces will improve community perceptions of the industry and improve the industry's ability to attract and retain people, particularly women, into its workforce.
Intended benefits	• Improved attraction and retention • Improved diversity • Improved mental and physical health and wellbeing • Lower stress in the workforce • Increased productivity
Financial implications	Organisations may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time to develop a process for removing offensive material on the project • Time and cost to plan for implementing a reporting mechanism • Financial costs for removing offensive material • Time from leaders to promote and support the delivery of the requirement.
Performance measurement	**Delivery phase** • Reporting of any offensive material and action taken
Behavioural outcomes	• People apply to work in the industry • Workers report offensive material as and if it occurs • Workers choose to stay in the industry • Improved diversity • Workers report improved health and wellbeing • Improved community perception of the industry • Easier onboarding of new people into the industry

3.3 The construction industry provides amenities to support a diverse workforce

Requirement	Organisations will provide workplace amenities that support the health, wellbeing and hygiene needs of all workers, particularly women, regardless of project or workforce size. This will be achieved by ensuring access to appropriate amenities and personal protective equipment (PPE).
Application	This requirement applies at the project level.
Action to be taken	Organisations will develop and provide to the client as part of tender documentation an amenities plan tailored to the size and scale of the project by undertaking an assessment of the amenities required on the project to support the participation of a diverse range of people in a safe and inclusive environment. Organisations will implement the amenities plan for the duration of the project ensuring amenities are kept in a condition that enables their safe and effective use.
Why this is important	All people working in the construction industry should have a work environment equipped to support their needs, including access to the appropriate amenities that they require. The quality of the amenities provided is a key factor in determining whether the work environment is considered supportive, with safety and privacy issues often raised as critical concerns by people working in the construction industry (examples of issues to consider include but are not limited to amenity location, accessibility, cleanliness and psychological safety of users). Providing the amenities needed to support a diverse workforce will enable a supportive work environment for people working in the construction industry. This will help to improve the productivity and engagement of the workforce, as well as impact upon the ability of the industry to attract and retain a diverse range of people.
Intended benefits	• Improved attraction and retention • Improved diversity • Improved mental and physical health and wellbeing outcomes • Lower stress in the workforce • Increased productivity • Increased safety of workers from minority groups
Financial implications	Organisations may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time to consider and plan amenities required for the project • Time to plan the location and access to the amenities • Potential cost of additional amenities.
Performance measurement	• Survey to staff • Physical amenities on site are in suitable condition
Behavioural outcomes	• People apply to work in the industry • Workers choose to stay in the industry • Increased workforce productivity and engagement • Improved diversity • Workers report improved health and wellbeing and personal safety

3.4 Women are represented in the construction industry

Requirement	Organisations will target the employment of women across critical workforce segments on the project, including trade roles and roles where women are underrepresented.
Application	This requirement applies at the project level.
Action to be taken	**Project tendering phase** Tendering organisations will undertake a project workforce assessment to identify opportunities for increasing workforce diversity and female representation across critical workforce segments, including trade roles and occupations where women are traditionally underrepresented (non-traditional occupations). Tendering organisations will set project targets to increase the representation of women in these critical workforce segments and roles, and develop a plan to achieve project targets. When establishing project targets, organisations are to ensure that: • Targets are aligned with applicable jurisdictional or client requirements • Targets surpass current industry averages for the representation of women.
Why this is important	Setting targets for appointing women and reporting on these targets to clients improves transparency and accountability about women's representation in the construction industry. Targets also enable individual organisations to consider what results they can achieve on a specific project. The requirement to include targets in tender documentation adds a competitive element to both setting and delivering these targets. Increasing the number of women in strategic decision-making roles improves diversity of thought and provides a clear indication that the construction industry provides career pathways that enable women's appointment to senior roles. The construction pipeline across Australia over the next decade is considerable, and meeting the demand for construction services will require an increase in the workforce at all levels. The ability to attract and retain women will influence the industry's viability and the deliverability of the nation's construction pipeline.
Intended benefits	• Women are attracted to the industry • Improved attraction and retention • Improved project workforce diversity • Improved mental health and wellbeing • Lower stress • Increased productivity • Increased industry workforce and skills • Women with caring responsibilities stay in the industry • Increased innovation through increased diversity
Financial implications	Organisations may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time to consider, plan and propose targets • Time and cost to monitor and report on targets • Potential cost to communicate and train the project team regarding the targets • Potential financial cost in pursuing the targets (e.g., marketing and advertising, recruitment, mentoring and leadership training).
Performance measurement	**Project delivery** • Reporting to the client on target progress and achievement
Behavioural outcomes	• Workers return to work after having children • Women apply to work in the industry • People choose to stay in the industry • Workers report improved health and wellbeing

3.5 Women hold leadership positions in the construction industry

Requirement	Head contractors will target the appointment of women into leadership positions and onto governing bodies and advisory boards, and will demonstrate their commitment to this.
Application	This requirement applies at the head contractor level.
Action to be taken	Head contractors are required to target the appointment of women into leadership positions by applying one of the following 3 options. **Option 1: Self-nominated targets** Head contractors will: 1. Identify the leadership roles and governing bodies that exist within their business 2. Identify the gender distribution of these roles and bodies 3. Specify targets for female participation for these roles and bodies 4. Report on these targets to clients as part of tender documentation, including providing information on the progress and activity of the organisation in reaching these targets. **Option 2: Targets linked to industry averages** Head contractors will: 1. Identify the leadership roles and governing bodies that exist within their business 2. Identify the gender distribution of these roles and bodies 3. Submit a plan to the client outlining how they perform against industry averages and actions being taken to enhance female representation. **Option 3: Specified targets** Head contractors will: 1. Identify the leadership roles and governing bodies that exist within their business 2. Identify the gender distribution of these roles and bodies 3. Submit a plan to the client outlining how they will achieve or surpass a target of 20% female participation in leadership roles and governing bodies.
Why this is important	Women are underrepresented in leadership roles across most Australian industries, including in the construction industry. Statistics from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency indicate that, although women make up half of the workforce, they remain underrepresented in management positions and executive-and board-level roles. Setting targets, monitoring progress and reporting on outcomes will help drive change across the industry and increase the visibility and prevalence of women in leadership positions across the sector. Allowing head contractors to self-nominate these targets and demonstrate their commitment allows for innovation and flexibility in the approach to achieving this change and ensures that organisations can adopt approaches that suit their businesses.
Intended benefits	• Women are attracted to the industry • Improved retention (women see successful role models) • Improved project workforce diversity • Increased productivity • Increased industry workforce and skills • Women with family responsibilities stay in the industry • Increased industry diversity

3.5 Women hold leadership positions in the construction industry

Financial implications	Head contractors may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time to analyse the organisation's leadership structure, set targets and develop a plan to achieve these targets • Time and cost to monitor and report on targets.
Performance measurement	**Project tender phase** • Documentation of head contractor organisational targets and progress
Behavioural outcomes	• Workers return to work after having children • Women apply to work in the industry • People choose to stay in the industry • Increased industry productivity and engagement



3.6 The construction industry will close gender pay gaps

Requirement	Head contractors will assess the gender pay gap and develop a plan to address gender pay gaps within their organisation. Head contractors are to identify and disclose gender pay gaps in line with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012.*
Application	This requirement applies at the head contractor level.
Action to be taken	**Project tender phase** Head contractors will make available their gender pay gap assessment and reporting, along with the organisation's plan for addressing gender pay gaps.
Why this is important	Closing gender pay gaps will improve the industry's ability to attract and retain women by providing an environment where women feel included, respected and rewarded for their contributions. An increased ability for the industry to attract and retain women will improve diversity within the industry. This has many benefits, including on productivity, innovation and skills. Closing gender pay gaps demonstrates that the work of men and women is equally valued by society. Taking this step will improve community trust in the industry and help to support a viable and sustainable construction industry in Australia.
Intended benefits	• Improved attraction and retention • Improved project workforce diversity • Improved mental health and wellbeing • Lower stress in the workforce • Improved workplace relationships • Increased productivity
Financial implications	Head contractors may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time to assess and understand the gender pay gap • Time to monitor and report on the gender pay gap assessment • Financial costs of addressing gender pay gaps through increases in wages.
Performance measurement	• Gender pays gap reporting is made available to the client • The head contractor provides assurance to the client that their organisation complies with pay parity requirements
Behavioural outcomes	• Workers return to work after having children • People apply to work in the industry • Workers choose to stay in the industry • Increased industry productivity and engagement • Workers report improved health and wellbeing

3.7 The construction industry employs people without bias

Requirement	Head contractors are to create and implement professional recruitment standards for interviewing, shortlisting and selecting candidates. These standards should seek to reduce the impact of conscious and unconscious bias on recruitment.
Application	This requirement applies at the head contractor level.
Action to be taken	The head contractor will have professional recruitment standards to be implemented by the organisation for interviewing, shortlisting and selecting candidates. **Project tender phase** Organisations will outline their approach for employing people without bias.
Why this is important	Removing conscious and unconscious bias present in interviewing, shortlisting and selecting people to work in the construction industry will remove barriers to employment often faced by a diverse range of workers. Removing these barriers by developing and implementing professional standards for recruitment will assist the industry to attract and retain a diverse workforce, and improve the engagement, productivity and sustainability of the construction industry.
Intended benefits	• Improved attraction • Improved project workforce diversity • Improved mental health and wellbeing • Lower stress • Increased productivity • Increased industry workforce and skills
Financial implications	Head contractors may encounter costs in the following areas when implementing this requirement: • Time and cost to develop professional recruitment standards • Time and cost to implement professional recruitment standards • Potential cost to communicate and train the project team • Leadership time to promote and prioritise the implementation of professional standards.
Performance measurement	• Reporting of the professional recruitment standards and implementation pathway made available to client • Independent survey of the workforce
Behavioural outcomes	• Workers return to work after having children • A diverse range of people apply to work in the industry • A diverse range of people are employed in the industry • People choose to stay in the industry • Increased industry productivity and engagement • Improved diversity • Workers report improved health and wellbeing

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