



MAY 2024

# Towards Gender Equity

Roadmap 2024-2027

“I failed to get promoted after my second time maternity leave – ***I was pushed aside*** and advised that the PM role needed to be full time”

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“Even though I have worked in the industry for a long time, I only occasionally visit sites. ***It is in this environment that I feel least confident and most self-conscious that I don't “belong.”*** I can't explain why this is different to visiting another organisation's corporate office – but somehow it is.”

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“The discrimination I have experienced is not overt, but rather more subtle. Things like being stared at like I'm in the wrong place, leered at on site. ***Talked down to or ignored by men***, or infantilised by other men.”

“Remove the bias that women can't do a role. Give her a chance and let her prove it. ***She may not do it exactly as a man, but the outcome will be the same.***”

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“There is a distinct lack of women leaders in the industry. ***Having children means that women take a career break to look after families. This career break stalls women's development of their careers.*** There needs to be greater opportunities for women to work part time, job share to ensure greater flexibility in options.”

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“I've spoken to an engineer here and she said she's had to get her phone number changed because ***she's been so harassed*** by people in the past.”

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“It was quite obvious that **any woman in construction has to go above and beyond** initially to earn respect and trust of those around her and prove she belongs there. Whereas I feel most men start with that respect and lose it, women have to work to earn it.”

*Quotes sourced from participants of a 2023 Victorian National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) survey on their experiences and perspectives as women within the civil construction industry.*



# 1 Background

In 2023-24 Major Road Projects Victoria (MRPV), in collaboration with the Victorian National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), hosted a series of workshops with senior representatives from 21 Victoria civil construction contractors. The aim of these workshops was to increase awareness of the challenges and opportunities for increasing women's participation in the industry and to collectively agree on an industry-wide approach to fostering greater gender equity.



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Key insights from these workshops included:

- Recognising gender equity as a safety priority and integrating inclusion strategies into Workplace Health and Safety frameworks.
- Emphasising the need for whole of industry collaboration, sustained effort and consistency towards inclusion.
- Growing diversity in representation and leadership through innovation and flexible working.
- Building a culture of equity and trust.

This Roadmap, which has been informed by discussions from those workshops, outlines the goals and priorities to support increased gender equity across the civil construction industry. It sets out the roles of both MRPV and contractors in driving this transformative change, emphasising that shifting the dial requires a collective effort. It provides industry stakeholders recommendations and guidance on fostering gender equity and offers a pathway to creating a more inclusive and equitable industry.

The Roadmap is part of MRPV's broader commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion across the civil construction industry. The Roadmap works in alignment with various state government and Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA) specific inclusion initiatives, including:

- [Building Equality Policy](#)
- [Victorian Social Procurement Framework](#)
- [Local Jobs First Policy and its related Major Projects Skills Guarantee](#)
- MRPV's (internal) Gender Equity Strategy 2024-2027.

One of MRPV's key focus areas in its Gender Equity Strategy 2024-2027 is to Partner with Industry to build safe and inclusive workplaces. Our focus is on leveraging our position of influence to accelerate the progress that is already taking place in small pockets across the industry.

Like MRPV's internal Gender Equity Strategy, this Roadmap acknowledges the historical disadvantages women and other gender diverse individuals have faced. This has often meant less access to resources and opportunities compared to their male counterparts, so it's important to take extra steps to ensure fairness and promote inclusion in the industry. Both documents therefore prioritise equity over equality.



## 1.1 Overview of gender equity in civil construction

**Despite efforts to improve gender equity, Australia's civil construction industry remains highly male-dominated, with only around 14% of the workforce comprised of women and a mere 2% in onsite roles. This number has not shifted for a decade, highlighting the industry's significant gender disparity<sup>1</sup>.**

The Australian Governments Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) 2022-2023 Employer Census data underscores the severity of the issue, revealing a staggering median gender pay gap of 31.8% in the construction sector – the highest across all industries in Australia<sup>2</sup>. It's crucial to recognise that the gender pay gap in the construction industry can be influenced by the disproportionate representation of women in lower paying entry level roles, coupled with barriers that hinder their advancement. This perpetuates the disparity in wages between men and women and underscores the importance of promoting equal opportunities for career progression and eliminating systemic biases within the industry.

Gender inequality in the civil construction industry has negative impacts on both Victoria's economy and on women. A 2023 survey by the NAWIC painted a disheartening picture of our industry, highlighting concerns around the gender pay gap and the lack of career advancement options for women. Less than half of respondents felt they did not have access to women role models and over half reported experiencing bullying and intimidation<sup>3</sup>.

While the introduction of the Victorian Government's Building Equality Policy (BEP) in 2022 has been an important catalyst for bringing more women into the industry, a focus on numbers alone is not enough to create sustainable change. To attract and retain women in the industry, we need to foster an inclusive culture that supports women's success. We also need to support women already in the industry in progressing their careers.

Shifting culture and driving systemic change requires a collaborative approach. We must actively and freely share initiatives and ideas to encourage innovation. We need to understand the interconnections and dynamics of topics such as the role of work practices and role models. And we need to recognise that our solutions need to be multi-faceted, involving multiple stakeholders and considering the diverse needs of women across different age groups and ethnic backgrounds.

1. [womeninconstruction.com.au/employers](https://womeninconstruction.com.au/employers)
2. [WGEA Employer Gender Pay Gaps Snapshot 2024](#)
3. [issuu.com/nawicau/docs/nawic\\_journal\\_2023](https://issuu.com/nawicau/docs/nawic_journal_2023)

## 1.2 Our shared vision for the industry

To be recognised across Australia as a leader in creating and growing gender equitable workplaces.

### Key outcomes



#### Cultural and behavioural change

Ensuring all staff have the skills and capabilities to recognise and address inappropriate actions, fostering a culture of zero tolerance towards behaviours that pose a risk to the psychological safety of all



#### Gender-informed working environment

A shared understanding of how the work environment has an effect on women, their health, safety and wellbeing. An environment which seeks the input of women and makes all women feel valued and respected at work.



#### Flexibility and remuneration

Ensuring pay parity, flexible work arrangements, and transparent career advancement opportunities to attract and retain diverse women in civil construction careers.



#### Employee attraction and retention

Making civil construction appealing for women by offering long-term career prospects and diverse career paths.



#### Ongoing learning and continuous improvement

Facilitating collaboration among industry partners to continuously improve gender equity practices, serving as a role model for other industries.

These five main outcomes serve as our roadmap for change, guiding our present actions and directing our future efforts (see Appendix 1).



## 2 Collaborative approach to driving change

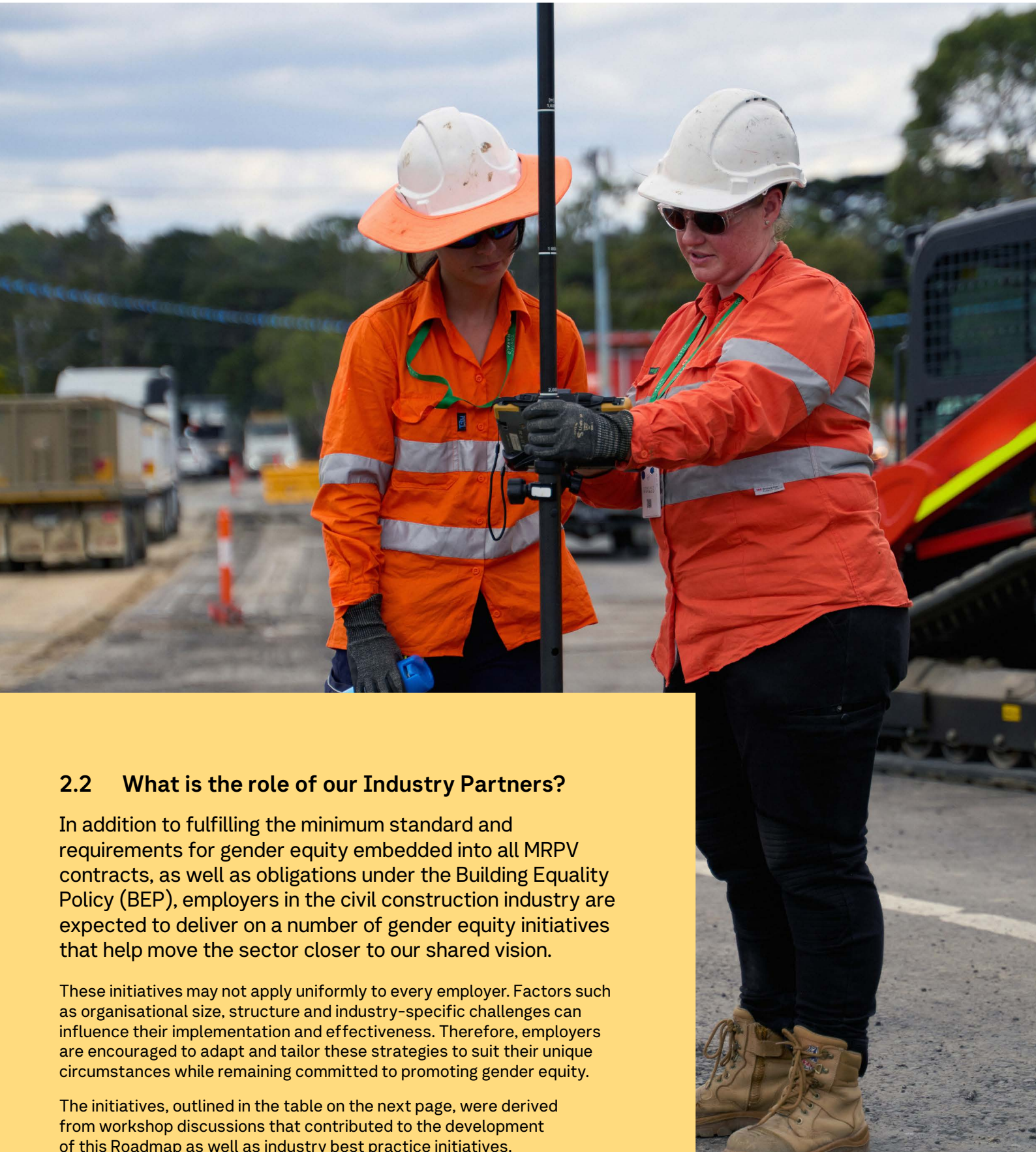
Achieving a diverse, equitable and inclusive civil construction sector will require decades, if not generations, of sustained, collective effort. It's essential for each of us to ensure we are actively playing our part in driving change.



## 2.1 What is MRPV's role?

As Victoria's lead road infrastructure delivery agency, MRPV has a unique role to play in driving initiatives that help achieve our shared vision. These initiatives were identified through an extensive stakeholder mapping exercise and targeted industry consultation.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Initiative</b>
<b>Set minimum standards and requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Define minimum acceptable standards for worksites.</li><li>– Develop guidance materials for developing Gender Equality Action Plans that exceed minimum standards.</li><li>– Support contractors in exploring alternative project delivery methods that attract and retain more women.</li></ul>
<b>Expert and advisory support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Create easily accessible industry-specific resources for implementing BEP and related initiatives.</li><li>– Support smaller contractors in developing meaningful Gender Equality Action Plans, as mandated by BEP.</li><li>– Advocate for stronger gender equity policies, addressing industry challenges and opportunities.</li><li>– Establish feedback and support mechanisms for contractors to share and address challenges implementing gender equity initiatives on MRPV projects.</li></ul>
<b>Collaboration and sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Establish forums for collaboration involving construction partners, subcontractors, and intermediary organisations.</li><li>– Actively document and share case studies of gender equity initiatives.</li><li>– Promote this roadmap across VIDA to encourage wider adoption of minimum standards and requirements.</li></ul>
<b>Learning and continuous improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Provide feedback to industry on outcomes and seek to grow good practice.</li><li>– Develop an outcomes measurement framework to track progress towards our shared vision and key outcomes.</li><li>– Establish a baseline for measuring industry's performance and report annually.</li></ul>



## 2.2 What is the role of our Industry Partners?

In addition to fulfilling the minimum standard and requirements for gender equity embedded into all MRPV contracts, as well as obligations under the Building Equality Policy (BEP), employers in the civil construction industry are expected to deliver on a number of gender equity initiatives that help move the sector closer to our shared vision.

These initiatives may not apply uniformly to every employer. Factors such as organisational size, structure and industry-specific challenges can influence their implementation and effectiveness. Therefore, employers are encouraged to adapt and tailor these strategies to suit their unique circumstances while remaining committed to promoting gender equity.

The initiatives, outlined in the table on the next page, were derived from workshop discussions that contributed to the development of this Roadmap as well as industry best practice initiatives.

Role	Initiative
<b>Leadership and Representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Senior leaders to participate in any MRPV/Government led gender equity initiatives.</li> <li>– Establish succession plans for leadership teams, prioritising gender diversity.</li> <li>– Allocate a budget for gender equity initiatives.</li> <li>– Set higher targets than mandated in BEP and take proactive steps to achieve them.</li> <li>– Identify reasons why senior leaders may not support inclusion policies and provide training/incentives as needed.</li> <li>– Ensure leaders regularly review industry inclusion reports, holding them accountable for implementing recommended strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pilot and implement flexible work arrangements including rotating rosters and part-time work.</li> <li>– Implement additional paid parental leave, above and beyond legislative requirements.</li> <li>– Establish greater flexibility for staff accessing and returning from parental leave.</li> <li>– Review organisational and project risk management frameworks in relation to their effect on women’s health, safety and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
<b>Employment and Career Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Expand recruitment and training initiatives to attract women from non-traditional pipelines.</li> <li>– Collect and analyse data on gender pay gap drivers, taking strategic actions to address them.</li> <li>– Establish sponsorship and mentoring programs for women in middle and lower management, providing additional resources for their development.</li> <li>– Implement formal, transparent criteria for promotions, bonuses, and career opportunities across all projects.</li> <li>– Ensure women have equitable access to professional training and opportunities, introducing quotas if necessary.</li> <li>– Establish relationships with educational institutions and employment agencies to create additional pathways for women.</li> </ul>



### 3 Monitoring & Evaluation

This Roadmap will be monitored and reported on a bi-annual basis to the MRPV Executive Leadership Team and on an annual basis to senior leaders of the civil construction industry through an annual forum.

The outcomes specified in this Roadmap will be used to help track progress being made. An outcomes measurement framework will be developed to help determine the impact of our initiatives.

This framework will establish a standardised set of criteria which will enable us to accurately measure progress towards our goals. Additionally, we will seek input from industry stakeholders to inform the development of this framework, ensuring its relevance for our sector.

The data collected around the specific initiatives and their success (or otherwise) will be used to inform an annual refresh of the Roadmap. This will ensure it remains current and adaptive to industry challenges.



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### 3.1 Measures of success

The following measures of success will help track progress towards our shared vision. The outcomes measurement framework, once developed, may introduce additional metrics tailored to specific initiatives and evolving priorities.

- Number of projects meeting the minimum gender equity standards and requirements.
- Adoption of innovative gender equity initiatives across construction partner organisational and project GEAPs.
- Shift in overall workforce demographic participation statistics.
- Shift on organisational gender pay gaps.

### 3.2 Data sources

Success will be measured using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantitative data sources include:

- Organisational Gender Equality Action Plans
- Project Gender Equality Action Plans
- WGEA Employer Census Data and Annual Report
- Building Equality Policy performance data.

Qualitative data will be gathered through:

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Project meetings.

# 4 Appendix 1: Outcomes

## *To be recognised across Australia as a leader in creating and growing gender equitable workplaces.*

Our shared vision has been divided into five key outcomes, each broken down into short, medium and long term goals.

SHORT TERM

LONG TERM



### **Cultural and behavioural change**

Ensuring all staff have the skills and capabilities to recognise and address inappropriate behaviour, fostering a culture of zero tolerance and a safe working environment for everyone.

- Staff understand and know of what is considered inappropriate behaviour
- Staff understand the impact of their inappropriate behavior incl. use of language



- People are equipped to call out inappropriate behaviour
- Systems & processes for handling inappropriate behaviour are consistent across industry
- Men are vocal advocates in the workplace



- Organisations foster a culture of respect with zero tolerance for unacceptable behaviours
- Organisations cultivate a trusting culture to foster open conversations about employee needs
- Gender equity in the workplace becomes the norm



### **Gender-informed working environment**

A shared understanding as to what health, safety and wellbeing looks like through a gender lens. An environment which seeks the input of women and makes all women feel valued and respected at work.

- Staff understand what a gender equitable environment involves
- The industry recognises the importance of a gender diverse workforce
- Industry sets min standards for gender specific health, safety and wellbeing
- Women leaders increasingly inform decisions across all facets of the industry



- People have the skills to create equitable work environment
- Women feel equipped and supported to perform their role fully



- Women leaders in the industry feel they have a platform to voice their opinions
- Women in the industry feel valued and respected



### Flexibility and remuneration

Ensuring pay parity, flexible work arrangements and transparent career advancement opportunities to attract and retain diverse women in civil construction.

- Flexible working options and leave are understood and standardised across industry to promote gender equity and inclusion
- Remuneration processes are standardised across industry and accessible to all genders



- Greater transparency in career progression, pathways and recruitment



- Construction industry has a reputation for offering long-term career opportunities for women



### Employee attraction and retention

Making civil construction appealing for women by offering long-term career prospects and diverse career paths.

- Early to mid-career women are increasingly aware of diverse, safe and exciting civil construction careers
- Girls and gender diverse students are more aware of the diverse careers in civil construction



- Women consider civil construction as a potential career path\*
- Girls and gender diverse students consider civil construction as a potential career path\*



- More women take on mid-senior level roles across the industry
- Growth in women role-models



### Ongoing learning and continuous improvement

Facilitating collaboration among industry partners to continuously improve gender equity practices, serving as a role model for other industries.

- Learnings from other industries are regularly captured and integrated as appropriate
- Good practices from across civil construction are regularly captured and shared among industry players
- Industry pilots and studies different ways of working and learns what has and has not worked



- Industry players collaborate and focus on continuous improvement
- The reputation of industry amongst diverse communities continues to improve



- Other industries connect with civil construction to learn from our experiences and apply them to their workplaces

Thank you to all our construction partners for your time and participation to date.

- Acciona
- Ace Infrastructure
- BildGroup
- BMD Constructions
- Bouygues Construction
- CPB Contractors
- Decmil
- FCC Construction Australia
- Fulton Hogan
- Gamuda Berhad
- Goldsmith Civil
- John Holland
- Laing O'Rourke
- MACA
- McConnell Dowell
- Negri Contractors
- Seymour Whyte
- Symal
- Ventia
- Whelans Group Investments
- Winslow

Your commitment and contributions are crucial as we work together to advance gender equity in our industry. We look forward to partnering with you on this journey.

[bigbuild.vic.gov.au/mrpv](https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/mrpv)



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