

SECURING NSW'S INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

A PROPOSAL FROM INDUSTRY
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Women
IN CIVIL

CCF NSW



**CIVIL CONTRACTORS
FEDERATION**

THE *voice*
OF THE INDUSTRY

19 OCTOBER 2021

A Proposal to Engage the Largest Underutilised Labour Resource in NSW to **SECURE NSW'S INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

Executive Summary

The civil infrastructure industry in New South Wales is, according to the last six NSW Government budgets, driving the NSW economy. The Government is committed to spending over \$107 billion on (all) infrastructure in the last budget.

The civil industry between 2015 and 2020 has grown by 69% in dollar terms. Research CCF NSW commissioned through BIS Oxford Economics and released in February 2021 shows that the civil infrastructure specific industry is set to grow between 2020 and 2024 by 48%.

The greatest infrastructure construction government in Australia's history should be proud of what it is doing.

However, such a plan brings challenges in even normal circumstances and now is not normal. The primary sources we have relied on for our increasing labour demands over the past seven years are now closed: COVID-19 has ceased international labour supply, and other state governments have learnt from NSW and developed their own economy stimulating infrastructure construction plans – their workers now don't need to leave home for work.

The October 2021 release of the Infrastructure Australia reports "Infrastructure workforce and skills supply" and "Infrastructure Market Capacity", which stated, "Australia is facing a public infrastructure workforce crisis" (p31), highlights the risk.

Not having the skilled workforce we need when we need it will result in project delays at worst and cost increases at best. Governments represent over 70% of the civil industry's customer base and thus carries this risk.

To secure NSW's infrastructure plan and the prosperity that comes from the economic stimulation and productivity gains of civil infrastructure construction, NSW must find a new source of labour.

Fortunately, we have an abundant, grossly underrepresented labour source available to us, located across the State in exactly the locations we need it - in the cities, regional centres, and rural areas where the Government needs projects constructed and then maintained.

Despite our need for it and its obvious suitability, the utilisation of this abundant resource in the civil roles of our industry where we need them most is just 5%. The people in this resource tell us they do not want to join our industry because they do not know about it, do not realise its opportunities; and, think the industry does not want them.

We acknowledge that the industry has not engaged well with women. Most individual employers have the will, but not the way, to do so. However, we have learnt what we need—listening to employers and women both in and outside the industry and via experience gained over the past four years in delivering the **CCF NSW Women in Civil Program**. We have developed many of the tools, systems and relationships needed to do so. But we do not have the resources to expand the Program in the required way.

The civil industry needs a **coherent, structured framework that connects stakeholders**

Government cannot construct this framework alone - it does not have the knowledge of the industry. CCF NSW cannot do this alone - it does not have the resources nor Government's credibility.

But, we can do it together, and we are offering herein a way forward

The CCF NSW has settled on its vision for the participation of women in NSW civil. It is the simplest vision imaginable - equality in participation. We are committed to what our industry needs to be and should be to

achieve this. We are committed to our belief that the market and technology will drive this outcome if it can be supported now with resources to create the **coherent, structured framework that connects stakeholders** we describe herein.

On the 8th March 2021 we submitted our first version of this Proposal to the NSW Government; only to have COVID-19 lockdown take front and centre for all our energies. With COVID now being managed well, it is time to return to this critical issue. The Infrastructure Australia reports make it clear that action is required urgently.

We present herein a Proposal, with two optional extensions, for the NSW Government to work with industry to secure the labour the NSW Infrastructure construction plan will need. The **Base Solution** and **Extension 1** are very similar Proposal to that submitted previously, for that well researched Proposal responded to the needs of all the industry. **Extension 2** is also the same but with double the capacity to deliver more and faster outcomes.

We cannot emphasise this next point enough – this Proposal has been developed following six years of work by CCF NSW with women and **employers of all sizes** in the industry. Our Membership includes Tier 1 contractors to small family-owned companies. Our Membership covers regional and Sydney-based businesses. This diversity allows us to say with confidence – this Program is industry developed and will work.

Our Proposal acknowledges the problem...

The reality is uncomfortable...more females will not **join (and **remain**) in the civil industry if they do not *understand* the industry, if employers are not *supportive*, and if the industry as a whole is not *welcoming*.**

...by focusing on both sides of the resource issue...

Improving all aspects of the **Supply side (*the number of women wanting to **join** the industry*), and also the **Demand** side (*ensuring we better **retain** those who join*)**

This is a complicated issue, and there is no simple, easy solution. Our employers, women already in the industry and those from outside who have trod similar paths all tell us that unless we approach both sides adequately, we will continue to fail to make substantive change.

So critical do we consider this Program to the sustainability of the industry that CCF NSW is prepared to invest in each of its years an amount equivalent to over 20% of our current revenue. The NSW Government's requested contribution represents **less than one half of one thousandth of a percent** of what the Government is spending on infrastructure each year.

A SNAPSHOT of the Problem, and the Obvious Solution

Why We Need to Act Now

The ageing, male-dominated structure of the NSW civil industry's workforce is a risk. The unprecedented infrastructure growth we are experiencing is essential for our economic growth and prosperity but presents a risk. NSW is not isolated from what is happening nationally and even internationally - the sources we have relied on for labour to service the growth to date are a risk. However, we have undertaken much research and work and are confident a viable solution is before us **if we act quickly and in unison**.

The Risks...

- Between 2015 and 2020, the size of the NSW civil infrastructure industry has increased by 69%.
- In September 2018: >200,000 people were directly employed in the civil industry (icare).
- Between 2020 and 2024, the civil industry in NSW is forecast to increase a further 48% from \$17.6 billion to \$26.2 billion.

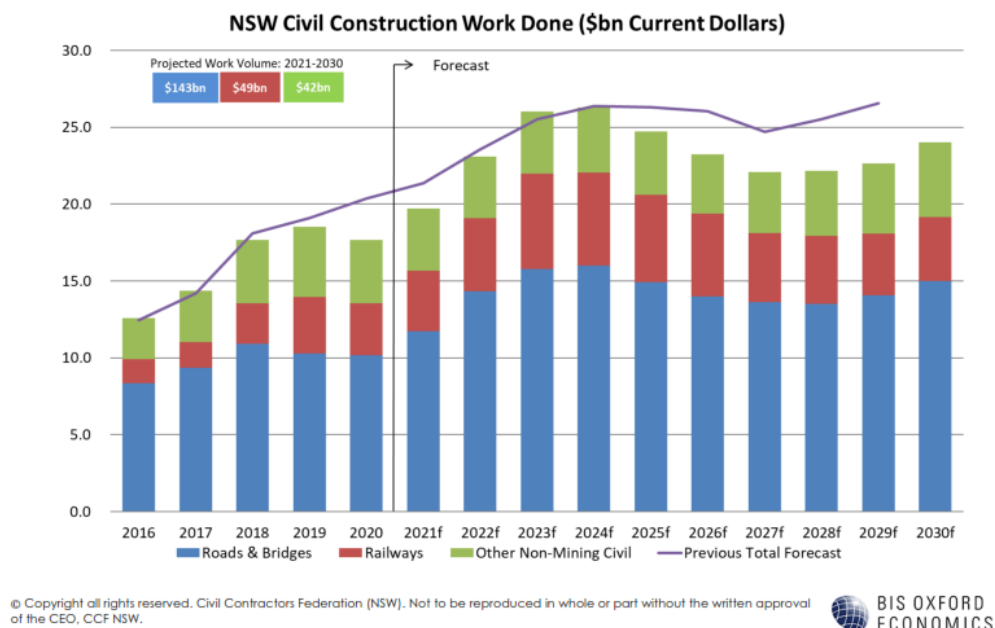


Figure 1: CCF NSW 10 Year Civil Forecast *BISOE February 2021*

- Other States have seen NSW's success and are now stimulating their own economies with infrastructure investment. The use of skilled labour from other States, a source we have been hugely reliant upon, has ended.
- International labour, the other major source we have drawn on over the past seven years to service labour demand, has closed and likely will be for years to come.
- Our workforce is ageing: Between 2015 and 2019, 18% were to reach retirement age (SkillsDMC 2015 Environmental Report). *NB: These older workers may have extended careers to enjoy salary increases in the industry but cannot be expected to remain in the industry for too much longer.*
- The October 2021 Infrastructure Australia report "*Infrastructure workforce and skills supply*" reflects these points. It identifies the peak demand for skills across Australia (2023 and beyond) will be 48% higher than the available supply, with labour shortages anticipated to be "...three times higher than 2017-2018..." (p31).

- Despite the amazing prospects our growing industry represents, the lack of a coordinated framework results in the industry being unable to attract young people to fill its burgeoning needs, nor even replace our ageing workforce. In March 2021, a CCF NSW survey of employers covering a statistically significant sample size of **6,182** employees showed:
 - Just 3.9% of employees were 19 years old or younger
 - Just 14.6% of employees were 20 to 25 years old

It is, therefore, no surprise to CCF NSW that Infrastructure Australia's October report states:

"Australia is facing a public infrastructure workforce crisis."

The Good News Is...

- In September 2020, we surveyed our employer Members:
 - Only 13% said their business workforce was at capacity.
 - 55% of respondents said they had **15% or more** capacity to do work, particularly in Tier 2 and below markets.
 - *What does this mean? In the very short term, perhaps 18-24 months, the infrastructure pipeline can be achieved with the resources we already have. BUT we only have a small window to get this right; we must act NOW to secure the necessary resources beyond this period.*
- While also a risk, the fact the NSW Government has established such a strong infrastructure pipeline allows us the opportunity to implement a sustainable long-term solution.
- **Fortunately, there IS a ready source of labour available located exactly where we need it...across the whole State.** We are grossly underutilising 50% of the available population.:
 - Results of a survey conducted by CCF NSW in early 2017 of employers in the industry (covering some **6,000** employees) revealed that **just 4.2% of the workforce undertaking civil roles were females.**
 - Results of the same Survey, conducted by CCF NSW in March 2021 of employers and **6,182** employees showed female participation rate in civil roles was now **5.7%**:

Role Segment <i>(Key Mgmt Personnel and CEO/MD are separate in this Survey)</i>	Females in the Segment	Segment as % of Total Workforce	Females in Segment	Segment as % of Total Workforce
Civil Professionals	10.8%	9.9%	5.7%	70.0%
Site Managers/Project Managers/Contract Managers	8.9%	8.7%		
Leading Hand/Foreperson	3.1%	7.9%		
Technical/Skilled	4.1%	28.2%		
Unskilled/Labourers/Site Hands	16.2%	15.3%		

Figure 2: CCF NSW Workforce Survey Responses; March 2021

- **These two survey results, nearly four years apart, reveal that despite an increase in the same period of approximately 30% in the volume of work undertaken in NSW civil work, participation rates in civil roles for females have improved by just 1.5%. (The evidence indicates a significant contributor is traffic control).** This type and rate of change are not enough to ensure the security of the NSW civil

infrastructure strategy. **To achieve a significant rate of change increase, we need to do something different to attract more women to the industry.**

- There are two unassailable economic benefits in improving female participation:
 - Were we able to access a female workforce as well as we access males, we would solve our future labour needs, and the security of the infrastructure pipeline assured.
 - The resource is already located exactly where we need it - across all of NSW. Civil infrastructure projects occur across all of NSW – not just Sydney. Costs are high to move scarce labour force between projects when we do not have staff in the local areas – it is more efficient to have local people. Fortunately, there is a ready supply of underutilised labour already spread across the State – exactly where we need them to be – females.
- Several external factors will occur without our influence that will assist change:
 - Technology is on our side; it is changing the nature of civil work exponentially faster. The civil jobs of a decade from now - let alone three decades from now - will be far from the stereotypical roles of a male worker lifting 25kg in a trench.
 - The civil industry *is a part* of society – it is not immune to the changes happening globally. Certainly, it needs prodding and help, but many people in the industry want change.
- We have learnt from our engagement that women do not join civil for the following reasons:
 - they (including parents) do not know enough about the industry
 - what they do know is based on stereotypes, and so dissuades them
 - if they do want to join, they cannot figure out how
- Our **Women in Civil Program** already has wonderful tools but is simply not resourced to make significant change quickly enough; and
- Following six years of research, development, and proven application, we already have a coherent plan and framework to reach and activate this underutilised labour resource.

Summary:

- **International and interstate labour are not reliable solutions anymore. We need to invest in the people already here in NSW.**
- **In order to construct the civil infrastructure that the NSW Government has planned, the industry needs access to more people.**
- **Females are the single largest underutilised labour source in our market, and they are already geographically located across the State where we need them.**
- **In moving to a more diverse workforce, technology is on our side, and societal change is on our side.**

To secure NSW's infrastructure plan, we need to act quickly.

Fortunately, we already have the capability, tools, knowledge and will to make change; we just need the resources to put that change in place.

This Proposal quantifies those resources.

MOVING FORWARD

The story is common ... employers want more females, but they aren't in the market.

The solution appears simple...get more females to apply.

The reality is uncomfortable...more females will not apply (and stay) in the civil industry if they do not understand the industry, if employers are not supportive, and if the industry as a whole is not welcoming.

The civil industry needs a **coherent, structured framework that connects stakeholders**. Government cannot act on this alone - it does not have sufficient knowledge of, or connections within, the industry. CCF NSW cannot do this alone, as it does not have the resources, nor Government's credibility (*this latter point is invaluable when dealing with schools*).

The **framework** our industry has:

1. A vision of where we want to be:

- CCF NSW has set a vision for gender equality in the industry by 2050. With such a vision, we break past mistakes – we communicate clearly what we stand for and focus on energy with a measurable timeline.

Cautious parents, students and job prospects all need to know what the industry sees for our future. Employers need it, too – no individual employer can set an industry's vision nor solve the labour supply issues.

- We have established Touchstones along the path for the industry and individual employers to voluntarily take up and track themselves against.
- We outline our vision in the following Section.

2. Enhance and scale up the large number of influencer tools we have already constructed and proven:

- CCF NSW already possesses much of what is needed: Collateral, Videos, a Personal Skills Audit, [CareerInCivil.com](#), Mentoring programs, [Women in Civil Program](#) Employer package, Job Match, the Institute of Civil Infrastructure, and, very importantly...employer relationships.
- We now need the funds to deploy those resources at a scaled-up capacity.

3. Provide structured, coordinated opportunities for stakeholders to connect and achieve the positive outcomes each already seeks:

- With our industry knowledge, we can connect Employer's, Universities, Schools, Job-seekers, and females that have already worked in another industry.

4. To Partner with Government, our major customer, who has much vested in our success, to provide the resources to do the activities necessary.

- Government provides credibility on the supply side (parents/caregivers, students, schools and universities); integrates with what we are doing; provides the critical gap in funding; and assists in conveying the message that jobs are available across NSW for women in civil infrastructure.

It's time to set a CLEAR VISION of what our Industry means to 'Be Civil'

The reality is uncomfortable...more females will not apply (and stay) in civil if they do not understand the industry if employers are not supportive, and if the industry as a whole is not welcoming. We must correct this.

CCF NSW's vision is that, by 2050, gender participation in **civil construction** will be equal...

Our vision is 50% for 2050

Informing this vision are fundamental beliefs:

CCF NSW's position is that all people should be equally well informed about our industry, and that any person who wants an available job in this great industry should be able to have it. Gender should not impact the receipt of that knowledge nor the choice to participate.

CCF NSW's position is that there must come a time when all who view our industry as a possible career will not see it based on gender stereotypes.

CCF NSW's position is that there must come a time when the forces informing and driving career choice will not be impacted on or filtered by the gender the person chooses (or does not choose) to identify by.

CCF NSW's position is that accepting as a vision anything less than **equality of participation** is unacceptable and does great harm. It is defeatist and entrenches the manifestly incorrect view that our industry believes females can never be equal.

Society supports this vision of equality. The industry understands this, and we understand that the idea of a vision of anything less than equality will soon be archaic.

Technology advancements in the industry support this vision. The jobs of two to three decades away will be completely different to now. The stereotype of skills needed in civil will be irrefutably wrong. We cannot conceive what technology will do to change the industry over the next 29 years. Still, we can be certain that those advancements will only make gender differences even more irrelevant than they are now. 29 years ago, in 1992:

- *Fax dominated e-comms transfer; email was a couple of years away*
 - *The first web browser had not been released. It was not until the following year that the world wide web became worldwide*
 - *Dial-up internet service was first introduced*
 - *CD sales surpassed cassette tapes for the first time; and*
 - *Who would have thought people would prefer typing over talking on the phone? In December 1992, the first SMS text message was sent*
- and...*
- *GPS location in earthmoving machinery, now a commonly used productivity multiplier, was still nearly a decade away*

Enacting our Vision:

- **This will not be a compulsory 'target' that every Employer must take up.** To achieve the cultural change required within the industry, we cannot force this level of change on all simultaneously. When they are ready, employers who want to take up the challenge can, and we will herald them as champions.
We trust the market will do what it has always done...realising business necessity and competitive opportunity exists; it will react:
 - If we do more to present our industry properly, more women will join it.
 - Those employers that act quickly will be more profitable, and the others will then follow their lead. But those businesses must be allowed to act when they are ready – when their business is ready. To do so otherwise will create exactly the backlash we do not want.
- We have set time-based **Touchstones** along the journey to check in on, allowing the industry to track its path. Progress will be a parabolic curve that will be relatively flat initially as we get up to speed and the message starts to resonate, but will then exponentially increase (because success will create success), before flattening as the goal becomes closer.
- Our industry wants to encourage more people to join our **civil roles**...not just administration roles (e.g. accounts and secretarial). At the beginning of 2021, females already represent 70% of administrative positions and 5.7% of civil roles. Blending the two statistics into a single number masks the reality, and we need to be comfortable dealing with this reality. As such, our vision of 50 for 2050 does *not* count administration roles in the measure.
- While we are assessing civil roles only, **we count ALL civil roles equally and in TOTAL.** The civil roles, (including civil professionals, site managers, Project and Contract Managers, Leading Hands, Technical & plant operators, and unskilled site roles) are all taken as counted equally (i.e., each of these civil role types does not have to be 50%).
- **We are counting a role as a 'role' whether it is a FT, PT or casual** (i.e., a part-time or casual role will count equally as a full-time role). The nature of employment is changing fast, and flexible work arrangements are becoming increasingly common. This way of measuring will ensure employers and employees achieve arrangements that suit them.

What has CCF NSW already achieved?

We have already completed:

- Developed and delivered for over four years, our **Women in Civil Program** incorporates much of what we include in this Program (*see next Section below*)
- Constructed many of the tools and collateral needed to influence the **Supply-side** (encouraging females to **join** the industry) – these influencer tools are scalable with some enhancements.
 - Learned what works in a school intervention to influence behaviour.
 - Created a university influencer model.
- Learned how to improve the **Demand side** (encouraging women to **remain** in the industry):
 - Bringing employers on the journey is critical: knowing what they are concerned about; what they want and need; has allowed us to encourage and support them achieve mutually beneficial outcomes – more women employed and more successful businesses.
 - Developed industry-tailored diversity training courses for supervisors and managers

The Existing CCF NSW Program

Following two years of research and consultation with women already in the industry, employers, schools, universities, and from the generously provided leanings of those outside the industry who have trod similar paths, CCF NSW launched our **Women in Civil Program** in June 2017.



Our Program's goal is to encourage more Women to Join and Remain in the NSW Civil Infrastructure Industry

The story is common ... employers want more females, but they aren't in the market.

The solution appears simple...convince more females to apply.

The reality is uncomfortable...more females will not apply (and stay) in the civil industry if they do not understand the industry if employers are not supportive and if the industry as a whole is not welcoming.

Our current Program pulls together the following elements:

- A structured annual **Mentoring Program (2022 will be our fifth year!)**
- Facilitation of monthly networking forums through our Virtual Community initiative (a very regional NSW focus) to which we invite guest speakers to educate and connect.
- Identification and heralding of female '**champions**', including the penultimate award of our annual **Women in Civil Excellence Award**. (This has been running since 2012).
- Our **CareerInCivil.com** website has amazing information that not only explains the roles available in the industry and provides our Skills Audit functionality but has a very heavy focus on encouraging females *across all of NSW* to join the industry.
- Many people in the industry have never supervised a female. Through courses developed by industry, we provide through our partner the **Institute of Civil Infrastructure training and education of supervisors** in managing a diverse workforce.
- We **provide a package of tools and advice for employers** to recruit and retain more females (some employers in the industry have never hired a female in the civil side of the business)

As an industry where a single customer – Governments - comprise over 70% of its revenue stream, employers are intensely customer-focused; very systems and safety orientated; very technical (requiring high skills), and very competitive. Individual employers must focus on quality and productivity - their business survival depends on it. They will use whoever they can access to achieve success.

But, like all industries, individual employers innovate at different speeds, and many need support to make the change. That is why CCF NSW constructed our **Women in Civil Program** – to create opportunity.

Over its six-year journey of development and application, our Program has faced some uncomfortable realities about the industry head-on. Still, it has also relied on a wonderful truth – that most people in our great industry do *not* fit the stereotype outsiders have of them. They are inclusive, pragmatic and accepting. They simply need opportunity and support...and that is what our **Women in Civil Program** provide.

Our Program is free (aside from the training) and is funded entirely from Membership. The Program, therefore, is too small for the magnitude of the task at hand. Post more than three years of delivery and a review following COVID-19; we acknowledge that resource constraints mean we will be unable to expand the Program. We need to meet the looming crisis befalling the industry and one that may place the security of the NSW infrastructure plan at risk.

Hence, this Proposal.

AN OVERVIEW OF OUR PROPOSAL

We present herein our Proposal, with two additional optional extensions, for the NSW Government to work with industry to secure the labour the NSW Infrastructure construction plan will need.

So critical do we consider this Program to the industry's sustainability that CCF NSW is prepared to invest in each of its years an amount equivalent to over 20% of our current revenue. The NSW Government's requested contribution represents **less than one half of one-thousandth of a percent** of what the Government is spending on infrastructure each year.

We cannot emphasise this next point enough – this Proposal has been developed following six years of work by CCF NSW with women, both from within and outside our industry, and **employers of all sizes** in the industry. Our Membership includes Tier 1 contractors to small family-owned companies. Our Membership covers rural and Sydney businesses. This diversity allows us to say with confidence that the industry has developed this Program and will work if supported for sufficient time.

Duration is critical to success. We believe five years should be the ideal supported term, and not less than three..

The Options

In developing our Proposal, we have first established a core, **Base Solution**. We believe the elements of this **Base Solution** are the bare minimum necessary to cover off to achieve the minimum coverage across the key elements to address. This is not a silver bullet solution; we must cover several areas with sufficient resources to be effective.

- The **Base Solution** covers both the **Supply** and **Demand**-side.
- **Extension 1 – Hardship Support** is a small addition focused on the **Supply**-side only. It supports those looking for jobs but who are suffering hardship in regional NSW.
- **Extension 2 – Our School Visit Program** is an excellent initiative focused on the **Supply**-side only. It replicates and expands a project we ran with the support of the NSW Government for nearly two years until June 2019 but could not afford to continue alone when the project funding ended.

THE PROPOSAL'S DELIVERABLES

Summary of the Deliverables

We present a summary here of the elements of the Program. We explain the Detail of the Deliverables in the Section below this.

Base Proposal:

- We shall establish the necessary standards, a code of conduct, and a tiered structure for employers to achieve improvements in female participation and to demonstrate to the market (both supply-side and customers) and demonstrate that they are doing so
- We will develop, organise and deliver each year over 75 **industry education sessions** across NSW into Universities and Schools and for Parents/Caregivers.
- We shall deliver 15 industry awareness civil site visits for Schools and Universities per year.
- Our **CareerInCivil.com** website will be tailored specifically for the three sources of labour (schools, university and other industries)
- We will expand our **Personal Skills Audit Tool** (which allows people to undertake an audit of their skills and interests against civil roles) to include connections to universities (in addition to RTOs);
- We will work with regional employers to identify civil-specific VET entry skill-sets for different roles and include these in the **Personal Skills Audit Tool**.
- Expand our free of charge Civil Youth Boost job matching tool and automate the matching service beyond just youths. It will be re-branded as **BeCivil Job Match**
- We will establish a free of charge **University Civil Student Community** across NSW, including the creation of a community for female civil engineering related undergraduates
- Using our network of committed employers, we will provide under the Proposal a **free of charge Internship Matching Service** for undergraduates undertaking civil related courses.
- We will provide free of charge a package to help member employers with the policies, procedures and forms necessary.
- We will provide to our contractor members free Industrial Relations legal advice specifically focused on establishing flexible workplace arrangements; and
- We will provide quarterly, free information sessions to Employer on how to establish flexible workplace arrangements.
- We will provide our contractor members with free employment relations legal support, including how to manage evolving employment issues...particularly related to flexible workplace arrangements
- We will provide 300 free of charge course places each year for (likely male) Leading Hands and Supervisors in managing a diverse workplace
- We will expand our current, very successful annual **WiC Mentoring** program by a factor of three – from 20 to up to 60 pairs per year.
- We will deliver a variety of short courses (4hrs duration) each year for up to 100 women to learn management techniques
- We will create a new **WiC Business Leader Mentor Program** with one intake of 20 pairs per year
- We will expand our Virtual Community Program – an invaluable resource for regional people - from 100 participants to 1,000.
- We will promote the success of women in the industry by providing, free of charge, 200 free of charge **Civil Infrastructure Manager Competency Gradings** each year through the Institute of Civil Infrastructure.

Extension 1: Hardship Scholarships

1. Provide 25 support payments per annum of up to \$2,000 to encourage those in regional areas suffering hardship to find jobs in the civil industry.

Extension 2: School Visit Program

1. Provide two School Visit Officers to travel NSW to explain the opportunities of the industry to school students.
2. We would undertake 150 school visits that could occur per year. We guarantee they cover the breadth of the State.

Detail of the Deliverables

In this Section of the Proposal, we provide detail on how the Proposal achieves the dual goals of:

1. Improving all aspects of the **Supply side** (*the number of women wanting to join the industry*), and
2. the **Demand side** (*ensuring we better retain those who join*)

1. Improving the **SUPPLY Side** – Have more females want to join the industry

The reality is uncomfortable...more females will not apply (and stay) in the civil industry if they do not understand the industry if employers are not supportive, and if the industry as a whole is not welcoming

We can achieve improvement in the Supply-side - the number of females wanting to join the industry – by providing a **structured framework** that promotes the industry as a destination too, and then connects the industry with **the three sources of potential female labour**:

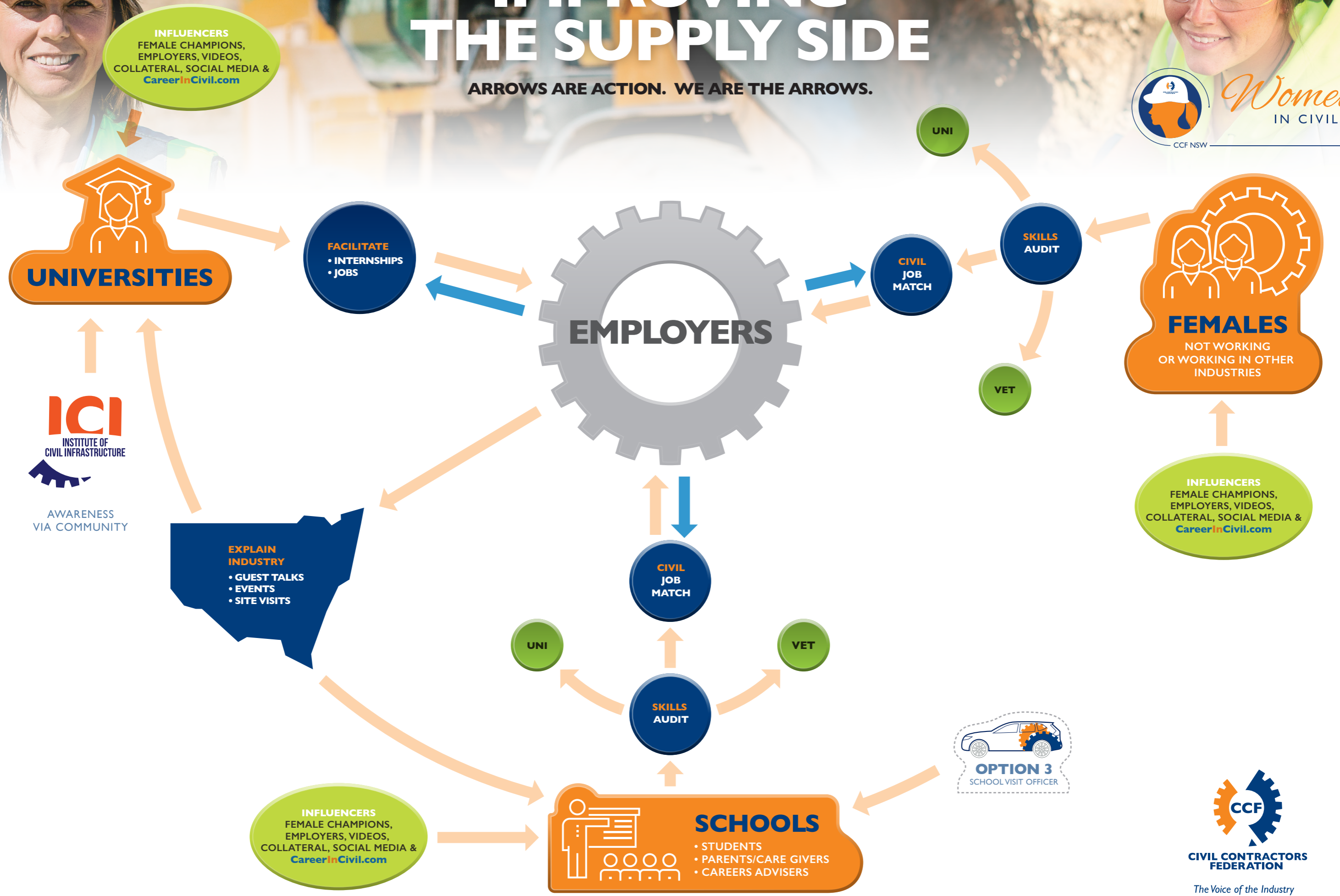
1. **Schools** and their Students and Parents/Caregivers who seek jobs
2. **Universities** and their students who seek internships and jobs
3. Females **working in other industry's (or returning to the workforce)** who seek need jobs

We are providing the Government with a Base Proposal and two further extensions for the Government to consider adding.

The **Supply Side** of the Program is summarised on the following page's graphic
"Improving the Supply Side."

IMPROVING THE SUPPLY SIDE

ARROWS ARE ACTION. WE ARE THE ARROWS.



The 'Base' Solution

Detail: Working with Schools and Universities

1. We will develop, organise and deliver **industry education sessions** across NSW at Universities, Schools and specifically for Parents/Caregivers.
These influencing sessions will explain the industry and the roles in it, and the opportunities, and shall include:
 - Employers - We will draw on our network of employers to present what employers are seeking.
 - Female champions - We will draw on our network of female champions and present them to explain their experience in the industry; we know these are very powerful.
 - We will encourage (with balanced reasoning) both VET and University as a career option for school leavers
 - We will provide industry and job awareness collateral to Schools and Universities (we already have this developed for schools but need University-specific material, including videos testimonials)
 - Under the **Base Solution** these sessions will be primarily delivered by recorded video to ensure we reach the entire State.
 - We know it is very popular with our experience doing this type of work (see Extension 2 below). After the first year's development, we would expect to deliver over 75 of these sessions per year. The **Base Solution** cost includes the development of all materials, provision of collateral; scheduling; and delivery of the sessions.
2. We shall draw on our network of employer champions to organise **Visits by Schools and Universities to civil sites** – the goal being to better explain the industry and what opportunities exist. We have had considerable experience doing this in the past and they are very well regarded (*NB: our experience is there are no safety issues*). After the 9 months to establish the Program, we shall deliver at least 15 visits per year.
3. Our **CareerInCivil.com** website already has Australia's best civil industry products designed to aid understanding of the industry and its jobs. These include our unique "job wheel", static and video job descriptions with accurate remuneration expectations, along with testimonials. These products have focused primarily on school children (both genders), moving directly to the industry instead of the other two sources. The Proposal funding will include us expanding within three months the resource and introducing even more female-specific messaging tailored specifically for the three sources of labour (schools, university and other industry).
4. Our free of charge **Personal Skills Audit Tool** allows people to undertake an audit of their skills and interests to match them against roles in the industry. The outcome is a report of the ten civil industry job roles the person's interests most match and assesses their current skills against each job. Participants are also advised of the participating RTO's in their area who regionally deliver the required training and are recommended for those roles. *We have examples and details of the Survey available if you wish to review them.* We shall, within six months, upgrade the Tool to include participating universities.
5. Our Free of Charge **Civil Youth Boost job matching** tool allows both employers and employees in any specific regional area to post jobs and their interest in those jobs. In short, this Tool will enable employers to register their roles (by type and geographic region) and allows potential employees to register their interest in taking up a role in a region. We then match the region and role and send the Employer's details to the employee to make contact. *While the Tool is complete, it is not an automatic matching service, and so is a high-workload service we cannot maintain since COVID.*

We shall within 12 months:

- i. Make IT enhancements to make the referral process automatic;
- ii. Expand the focus beyond just youths to include any of the three sources of female labour (schools, Universities, other industry job-seekers).
- iii. Resource the Tool to attract more employers; and
- iv. Rebrand as **BeCivil Job Match** but retain its FOC service.

Detail: University Specific Elements

Consultation with female graduate engineers in our Women in Civil Mentoring program determined it was advantageous for students that this program element is delivered in partnership with both The Institute and CCF NSW. Within the first 12 months, we shall:

1. We shall develop and begin to provide under the Proposal within six months a **University Civil Student Community** across NSW. This includes the creation of a community for female civil engineering related undergraduates. Our partner, The Institute of Civil Infrastructure, an organisation well known to the NSW Government, will work with us to achieve this.
2. Most Universities require civil engineers to undertake internships but provide limited support with employers for students to secure them. Students are often forced to pay parties significant fees to find what is effectively free labour. Using our network of committed employers*, we will provide within 12 months under the Proposal a **Free of charge Internship Matching Service** for civil related undergraduates.
3. For University students, we will also provide a Free of Charge matching system **for jobs** (FOC) to enhance our **BeCivil Job Match** program.

** We will create a Code of Conduct for employers willing to do this. Students that take them up know they are getting an employer of choice for women.*

Detail: Women Already Working in Another Industry, or Looking to Re-enter the Workforce

Our work to date has made it clear that success in this area is about creating BOTH awareness and opportunity:

- We already have our extraordinary **CareerInCivil.com** site, collateral and tools, which require minor modification to focus on this target audience.
- Regional areas are thin markets, and industry very much needs those that *are* interested in applying the ability to be more employable quickly (via undertaking courses shortly after employment). We will utilise our FOC **Personal Skills Audit** (as explained in the Section above) and will establish with our Member RTO's such as TAFE NSW (who we have already engaged with on this Submission), to provide **civil-specific entry VET skill-sets for different job/roles**. Within the first 12 months of the Program, we will facilitate the involvement of employers in regional areas to ensure the courses are based on their needs.
- To connect interested applicants with employers who are seeking to hire, we will provide access for all females to an upgraded FOC **job matching** service **BeCivil Job Match** (see the explanation of this element above).
- **Flexible Workplace Arrangements:** While we believe the remedy is best managed in the Demand Side (i.e. it is discussed in the "Retention" section following), we are very aware that females returning to the workforce often seek flexible work arrangements. In short, for the industry to attract and retain more females, we need to be more flexible in what our working arrangements industry offers. We will provide IR advice to member employers to establish such arrangements.

EXTENSION 1 – Hardship Support for Regional Areas

Under this Extension, we will establish hardship support grants each year to 25 individuals each year with \$2,000 each to support their employment in the industry. These will be for people coming difficult economic circumstances in regional NSW.

For example, a common reason cited for people not being able to secure a job within the civil industry in regional areas is that they do not have a driver's license and cannot attend civil sites that are often out of town and constantly relocating.

We envisage these grants will be available to women from all three Sources (Schools, university, and unemployed/Other work). Still, we would be more than welcome to take the Government's input on this and the criterion of the grant distribution.

EXTENSION 2 – Dedicated School Visit Team

We will expand the School Service we are already offering in **Base Solution** with two dedicated School Visit Officers who will independently travel across all of NSW visiting schools.

These Officers, who will have both worked in the civil industry *on-site in a civil role*, shall explain what the industry is, what is involved in the jobs in our industry, and what career opportunities are like for women. These visits will, at times, be accompanied by a local employer or be a site visit. They will use the extraordinary tools we have already created on our amazing website **CareerInCivil.com**.

We are confident 150 school visits could occur per year, and we would guarantee they cover the breadth of the State. Visit commencement would occur after recruitment and training, which we estimate will take three to four months.

We clearly understand this activity. We have already undertaken a similar project in the past - a 20-month school visit program, concluding in June 2019, that was extremely successful (see comments below).

That Program, which employed a female officer, proved that industry going into schools was extremely well regarded.

We have, however learned from this prior experience an important lesson. As Training Services NSW funded it, we could only recommend to students we met a VET outcome. We would not do that again and would instead tailor our presentations for University, VET or immediate employment without VET. Our experience is that a good advocate who understands the industry can explain all opportunities available in the industry.

"A total of 92 schools [across NSW – see extract below] have been visited since Program commenced in July 1 2017, greatly exceeding the Program target of 60.

- *This brings the total to 6,494 students attending one of our school visits through the Program since July 2017*
- *1,189 (27%) of these students in the 2018/19 year were females This is an improvement from 2017/18's 12% - reflecting the work done by our Visit Officer to convince over the long run the schools to bring more females to what they started out believing was a male-only program."*

"CCF NSW focused on Regional NSW

- *The CCF NSW Back-to-School program has not just focused on Sydney metro, but has visited **towns across NSW**. From Ballina to Broken Hill to Batemans Bay, we saw as many regional schools as possible. All 11 regions of the State were visited – this was a very important element of our Program to educate the whole of the State, not just a few metro areas or even key regional centres.*
- *Regional areas are more resistant to the 'fly-by' Program. They stated clearly that they wanted to know we would be around for the long term, with many taking several calls to respond positively.*
- *Over time word spread between schools about what we were doing. More became aware of the Program from other schools and were less resistant to our approaches - this made it easier to gain access to the schools the longer the Program proceeded."*

2. Improve the DEMAND Side – Employers and Retention

The story is common ... employers want more females, but they aren't in the market.

The solution appears simple...get more females to apply.

The reality is uncomfortable...more females will not apply (and stay) in civil if they do not understand the industry if employers are not supportive, and if the industry as a whole is not welcoming

Informing women about the industry will not be enough. We need to engage employers in attracting and retaining more women, **and** we need to improve activities that support retention.

We accept that our industry has to do better – we must be more welcoming and be more flexible in offering opportunities for women they want. We must manage the workplace more carefully, train our supervisors in managing a diverse workplace, and retain the women we have to tell their stories and support the new entrants. We must increase our participation rates, **so women are not feeling like a minority in their workplace.**

This bold text in the preceding paragraph is important. CCF NSW believes strongly that we will best achieve significant change in the industry **by supporting individual employers** to realise the benefits of having females in the workplace. Those that see the benefits will act and reap the rewards. **The market** will then rapidly adjust as those first employers achieve business success.

Our view is this will not happen by the Government simply setting aggressive rules – that creates exactly the wrong environment and does not let the industry change **by leadership**. If we force humans to do things, they do so unwillingly. Let them find out how good something is, and they cannot be stopped taking it.

Our *industry* genuinely wants to be better; it just needs help to do it. Most civil construction *employers* we engage with are highly motivated to be involved in this work...they simply do not know-how.

The good news is that we understand what we have to do following the last six years of work – of engaging with employers and women already in our industry.

All initiatives in **Section 2 – Improve the DEMAND Side** are **included** in the '**Base Solution**' scope and cost.

Detail: Directly Supporting Employers

Our focus is on establishing a voluntary mechanism to involve employers. Market forces will then quickly drive the sought behaviours.

1. We shall establish the necessary standards, a code of conduct, and a tiered structure for employers to achieve improvements in female participation and to demonstrate to the market (both supply-side and customers) and demonstrate that they are doing so:

- i. We have set **Touchstones** for improvement over time that aligns with our Vision for the industry.
- ii. We have already deployed a **Code of Conduct** for employers who chose to be involved in our current ***Employer Champions for Women in Civil***.
- iii. We shall deploy **tiered, escalating standards** for our Employer Champions program
- iv. The **standards** are based on key metrics:
 - a. Number of females in civil roles (a role can be FT, PT, Casual)
 - b. Number of supervisors that have been trained in managing a diverse workforce (see below)
 - c. Code of Conduct implementation

The metrics of these tiered standards, e.g. Evolving / Established/ Advanced, will each rise over time in accordance with our Touchstones

- v. We shall **Audit** to confirm our Employer Members are achieving the standards and shall issue Certification with the level of standard the Employer has achieved. This independent measure will allow standards across the industry to increase.
- vi. We shall **widely showcase** the employers that participate...employers that are championing women in civil.
- vii. The Government would give weight to these standards in **tender assessments**.
- viii. All our **job matching activities** (see Section 1) shall identify whether an employer is involved in the standards and at what level.

2. We will support employers with systems and employment advice:

- i. We will produce and maintain a comprehensive package of policies and documentation supporting women in civil. These will be even more important given the passing of the recent *Sex Discrimination Act (Cth)*. We have already produced a version of this package and will enhance it under the Proposal.
 - a. A major focus of the package components will be on supporting employers to learn to create and implement flexible, mutually agreeable workplaces. This package will, very importantly, explain how employers can create flexible workplace arrangements.
 - b. We will also provide quarterly free of charge information sessions for employers on creating and implementing flexible workplace arrangements.
- ii. Our employer Members will receive free employment relations legal support on managing the evolving employment issues...particularly related to flexible workplace arrangements. This includes setting up Enterprise Agreements and individual employment contracts.

3. We will support employers with their personnel development:

The harsh reality is that many male workers in the civil industry have never worked in a civil construction environment with a female. Supervision and leadership are key to managing those working relationships effectively, *and yet* many leading hands, supervisors and site managers in civil have themselves never managed females in a civil work environment.

It is widely accepted that the quality and nature of 'direct supervision' is a key facet to **retention** (see below). Teaching male managers and leaders about managing in a diverse workplace was paramount in the Australia Defence Force's integration of women in the 1990s. Still, our industry is not widely training its leaders in how to manage in this new paradigm.

- i. Under the Proposal, we will provide through the Institute of Civil Infrastructure, up to 300 FOC courses each year for (likely male) Leading Hands and Supervisors to learn how to manage people in a diverse workplace. Each course is four hours long and is in a small (max 25) live classroom but will be available via Livestream to ensure regional people can participate in a live environment. As such, it can be accessed anywhere in the State. *Note: 1st year will be up to 50%.*

This will be a critical driver in securing workplace cultural change.

Detail: Directly Supporting Retention

All of the initiatives below are included in our **Base Solution**.

Females in civil repeatedly tell us retention is about micro *and* macro issues. Do their colleagues, supervisor and Employer support them? Does the industry support them? Our retention efforts focus on both levels – some of those are stated above in the previous section [Detail: Directly Supporting Employers](#), but others are directed at the women in the industry themselves:

- Under the Proposal, we will expand our current, very successful 10-month **WiC Mentoring** program by a factor of three – from 20 to 60 pairs per year. *(This element is about to commence its fifth year (2022), and all products are in existence and established. There is not cost for participation for CCF NSW Members).* The expansion will occur in 2023.
- Through the Institute of Civil Infrastructure, we will provide a Step-Up Business Leaders program to support and encourage them to transition from 'doing' to 'supervising' people – the target audience is potential engineers, project managers and joint business owners. We will deliver various short courses (4hrs duration) each year for up to 100 women to learn management techniques (25 participants in the first year). These will be delivered in a live classroom but will be available via livestream to ensure regional people can participate in a live environment.
- We will create a new **WiC Business Leader Mentor Program** with one intake of 20 pairs per year, commencing 2023. We will pair a leader of a younger/ smaller business with a senior executive of a larger firm. This will support a grossly under-supported segment of our community...female business owners.
'Sally' runs the entire financial and administrative side of a rural civil contracting business employing ten staff and ten contractors part-time. Her husband runs the operational side of the business. She is 34 with two children. She has no one to talk to discuss the problems and opportunities they face as a business or explore her ideas for the business. (Name changed)
- We have an established **Virtual WiC Community** that meets monthly informal meetings with guest presenters. This is a critical enabler, particularly in rural NSW, where the tyranny of distance compounds our low female participation rate; female peers geographically close are staunch competitors. Under the Proposal, we will expand the Program from 100 participants to 1,000 within three years of Program commencement.
- Women are competent at doing civil work, and we want to promote this and showcase their success. Champions are irrefutable influencers. The Institute of Civil Infrastructure has already developed with industry a robust competency assessment framework for managers in the industry (not just engineers). Under the Proposal, 200 free of charge **Civil Infrastructure Manager Competency Gradings** will be provided FOC for women already in the industry each year.

CONCLUSION

CCF NSW has presented herein a Proposal that seeks to secure females as a significant labour resource for the NSW civil construction industry.

If we do not act now to increase female participation rates significantly above the current 5%, the NSW civil infrastructure construction plan will soon be at risk of cost escalation and schedule delays. True, this will take one to two years to realise, but we expect our Governments to lead when a problem is identified and when the solutions to them take time to work – the time to act is, therefore, now.

We cannot simply inject funds or implement more "cultural change" think-tanks, websites, and conferences. The Government cannot merely set a target; offer financial incentives to women to join the industry or employers to hire women. Responses like this have failed to work in the past and reflect panic rather than leadership. They will do more harm than good to progress within our industry.

Women want equality and opportunity. Employers want resources and choice. Both want success. Some are more innovative than others. The civil industry is very commercial, and employers will react when an opportunity presents itself. Those that do not change will face the consequences of evolving markets – they are left behind.

Change must be *allowed* to happen, *supported* to happen. We must encourage and prompt but allow employers and women to come on the journey at their pace. We must support both the '**supply**' and the '**demand**' sides, show them the benefits, and herald champions. We must allow women and employers to see the opportunities and then support them in taking the steps.

CCF NSW has learnt what is wanted and needed. We have listened to employers. We have listened to women both within and outside the industry. We have extensive experience gained from delivering our *Women in Civil Program* over the last four years. We have developed many of the tools, systems and relationships to implement what is needed.

The civil industry needs a **coherent, structured framework that connects stakeholders**. Government cannot do this alone - it does not have the knowledge of the industry. CCF NSW cannot do this alone - it does not have the resources nor Government's credibility. But we can do it together.

CCF NSW is willing to commit substantial resources to support the Program we present herein, but our resources alone cannot make the change necessary – we need the support of the NSW Government.

The CCF NSW has settled on its vision for the participation of women in NSW civil. It is the simplest vision imaginable - equality in participation. We are committed to what our industry needs to be and should be. We are committed to our belief that the market and technology will drive this outcome if it can be supported now with resources to create the **framework**.

This Proposal is virtually identical to the one provided to the NSW Government on 8th March 2021, that COVID overtook. It provides a **means** by which, for a comparatively very small amount of money, the NSW Government can create **with** industry a way to increase the utilisation of women in civil significantly and, in doing so, ensure the NSW civil infrastructure plan is secure into the future.

*The **story** is common ... employers want more females, but they aren't in the market.*

*The solution **appears** simple...get more females to apply.*

*The **reality** is uncomfortable...more females will not apply (and stay) in civil if they do not understand the industry, if employers are not supportive and if the industry as a whole is not welcoming.*

"Australia is facing a Public infrastructure crisis". "At this peak, demand is 48% higher than supply". "Action is required. Continued investment in public infrastructure without significant expansion of workforce supply risks compounding shortages already evident in the workplace, increasing the risks to delivery of this once in a generation investment pipeline in the years to come" Infrastructure Australia, October 2021

How do we act? Together on this Proposal. Now.



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