
MEDIA RELEASE

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CCF NSW launches '50 by 50' campaign to drive women's participation in civil

The peak representative body of employers in the New South Wales civil construction industry, the [Civil Contractors Federation NSW](#) (CCF NSW), has today announced a new campaign, '50 by 50', to encourage more women to join and remain in the New South Wales civil infrastructure industry. This is a crucial element in a wide-ranging 'Women in Civil' Proposal submitted to the New South Wales Government last week. The vision is to reach equal gender participation within the New South Wales civil construction industry by 2050. The CCF NSW is calling on the NSW Premier, Dominic Perrottet, to work with industry to implement the Proposal immediately.

A survey from March this year by CCF NSW showed that female participation rates in New South Wales civil infrastructure roles stood at just 5.7 per cent. The same survey conducted four years earlier, in 2017, gave a result of 4.2 per cent. A recent report from Infrastructure Australia, ['Infrastructure Market Capacity'](#) into workforce skills supply versus demand, spotlighted a rising nationwide skill shortage across the construction sector, with peak demand for skills from mid-2023 and beyond forecasted to be 48 per cent higher than the available supply and labour shortages anticipated to be three times higher than 2017-2018.

According to CCF NSW's CEO, David Castledine, these participation numbers are too low and are not improving fast enough. Addressing the gender imbalance is critical to solving the current 'public infrastructure crisis' described by Infrastructure Australia and thus securing the New South Wales Government's infrastructure construction plan.

Mr Castledine said, "The Proposal we have submitted to the New South Wales Government provides a **coherent, structured framework for willing engagement between stakeholders that will lift participation rates**. We call on the Premier to act immediately to support the Proposal. Let's get on with the work needed before the crisis described by Infrastructure Australia hits."

The CCF NSW's Women in Civil Proposal was constructed following consultation with female workers and employers from within CCF NSW's diverse 450 strong Membership. The Proposal is an extension of the CCF NSW's multi-faceted Women in Civil initiative launched in 2017 and reflects learnings gained over the four years it has been in place. The Proposal is largely the same as one submitted to the Government on International Women's Day, 8th March 2021, but on which work was halted due to of COVID-19.

Mr Castledine went on to say "This isn't just a gender equality issue; there is an economic imperative that drives us to fix this problem. Civil infrastructure construction is the powerhouse of the New South Wales economy, and employers are looking for more labour to do this work.

"At female participation rates of just 5.7 per cent, we have an amazing opportunity and **an obvious solution to secure the NSW infrastructure plan**. Failing to act differently and immediately will mean we could see delays and cost increases in projects.

"Since 2017, our Women in Civil program has been extremely well-received by both women and employers and we have learned a great deal, but it is too small a program compared to the enormity of the task.



The Voice of the Industry

"The real problem we have is less about culture; it's really one of demand exceeding supply. We need to attract more women to apply for jobs.

"The reason women have not been doing so is that we, as an industry, have failed dismally to present ourselves well enough to this discerning market. We know from talking with women and parents over the past six years that we need to communicate far better what amazing opportunities our industry has to offer. We need to talk about how our industry is focused on ability rather than gender.

"Our vision of '50 by 50' makes it clear that we want women to join and remain in the industry.

"But forcing a culture or contractual targets on employers won't fix the problem; it may even compound it. We need to set a measurable vision, encourage more women to join the industry, support those in the industry to remain, and support employers who are smart enough to see the commercial and workplace benefits of employing women in civil," said Castledine.

To demonstrate the industry supports equality as its vision, CCF NSW asked a sample of its Membership if they would be willing to commit in writing to supporting '50 by 50' and to actively support greater female participation by becoming Employer Champions for Women in Civil. Within just days, over 35 employers from Tier 1 multi-national contractors to small regional family businesses and industry stakeholders such as TAFE NSW have signed the commitment.

On the campaign, Kim Liddell, CCF NSW board member, Women in Civil committee member, past CCF NSW Woman in Civil of the Year, finalist in the 2021 NSW Women of the Year Awards, and founder and managing director of [Non Destructive Excavations Australia](#) said:

"The CCF NSW has been at the forefront of real, meaningful action to support women in civil by having run its highly successful Women in Civil program for the past four years.

"With this '50 by 50' campaign and the Proposal put to the NSW Government, we will empower rather than force both employers and individuals to drive female participation rates. The great majority in the industry want this change but do not know how to make it happen or have adequate resources to do so.

"While CCF NSW is willing to commit over 20 per cent of its annual revenue to this critical Proposal, we cannot do the work alone. We desperately need the commitment of the NSW Government to support the Proposal and, given they have had the essence of it since March, we urge them to announce their support before the end of November," concluded Ms Liddell.

A public copy of the CCF NSW Proposal can be found on the CCF NSW website.

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Media: Elyse Nourry 0447 225 079