



# CONSTRUCTION LEADERSHIP REPORT

2026

Insights on Culture,  
Safety and Change

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	About EPIC - Page 4
<b>2</b>	Executive Summary - Page 5
<b>3</b>	Themes Raised - Page 6
<b>4</b>	Methodology & Research Approach - Page 7
<b>5</b>	Chapter 1 - Pages 8 - 14
<b>6</b>	Chapter 2 - Pages 15 - 20
<b>7</b>	Chapter 3 - Pages 21 - 27
<b>8</b>	Chapter 4 - Pages 28 - 33
<b>9</b>	Chapter 5 - Pages 34 - 41
<b>10</b>	Chapter 6 - Pages 42 - 47
<b>11</b>	Chapter 7 - Pages 48 - 53
<b>12</b>	Chapter 8 - Pages 54- 62
<b>13</b>	Chapter 9 - Pages 63 - 69
<b>14</b>	Appendix A - Pages 71 - 73
<b>15</b>	Data Sources - Pages 74 - 75



# FOREWORD

I still remember my first day on a construction site, 30 years ago. I was a teenager stepping into a tough culture, excited but unprepared for the realities that would shape me. In the decades since, I have been the only woman in the room more times than I can count. I have lost colleagues to preventable accidents. I have watched talented people burn out or walk away because the industry broke their spirit.

These experiences are why I founded Empowering People In Construction (EPIC): to empower people in construction, and to ensure that the next generation inherits an industry that values every voice and every life.

This report matters now more than ever, because our industry stands at a crossroads. Work is booming, yet we struggle to attract and retain talent. That gap is not a recruitment problem. It is a culture problem. When I speak with leaders, I hear a genuine hunger for change. People are tired of lip service. They want action: safer sites, inclusive teams, and leaders with the courage to do what is right even when it is hard.

In these pages, you will hear the unfiltered voices of 50 leaders grappling with the same questions. How do we repair trust? How do we build a culture where no one gets hurt and everyone belongs? The answers require honesty and, above all, courage.

Reading these insights, I am equal parts heartbroken and hopeful. Heartbroken by the stories of cultural harm: the bullying, the harassment, the zero-harm safety policies that rang hollow when no one actually cared after an incident.

And hopeful because I also see people who want a better way. Leaders are already emerging who refuse to accept the unacceptable.

**"The behaviour you walk past is the behaviour you accept."**

**Construction Leader | Infrastructure | 30+ years**

To every construction leader reading this: we wrote this report for you. It is both a mirror and a map. You may see reflections of your own struggles and missteps. I certainly did, and that was painful. But you will also find direction and hope. Our industry's future depends on those willing to lead differently. After almost three decades, I am more convinced than ever that real leadership is not about being the toughest person in the room. It is about having the heart to listen and the guts to act.

The 50 leaders who lent their voices to this project showed tremendous candour. I invite you to honour their honesty by embracing the challenges and solutions laid out here.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Hucker".

Angela Hucker  
CEO, EPIC

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# ABOUT EPIC

## WHO WE ARE

EPIC (Empowering People in Construction) works with construction companies, government agencies and industry associations to strengthen leadership capability, manage psychosocial risk and improve workplace culture.

Founded by construction industry professional Angela Hucker, EPIC was established to address a challenge consistently observed across major projects: the gap between technical excellence and leadership capability.

After more than 30 years working across the construction industry, from site environments to leadership roles, Angela created EPIC to support organisations to address the cultural and leadership factors that influence safety, workforce wellbeing and retention.

EPIC works across four interconnected pillars:



### Leadership

Strengthening leadership capability to support people, manage risk and lead high-performing project teams.



### Culture

Building psychologically safe, inclusive workplace environments where people can speak up and contribute.



### Workforce Capability

Preparing workers with the skills needed to operate effectively in complex construction environments.



### Performance

Improving safety outcomes, workforce retention and sustainable project delivery.<sup>10</sup>

EPIC operates on a simple principle:

“**Leadership shapes culture.  
Culture shapes outcomes.**”

The challenges identified throughout this report are ultimately leadership challenges.

When leadership capability improves, workplace culture improves. When culture improves, safety, performance and workforce retention improve.

For this reason, EPIC’s work focuses on strengthening leadership capability and supporting organisations to build workplaces that are psychologically safe, inclusive and sustainable.

This report is intended not only to diagnose the challenges leaders raised, but also to contribute to a practical roadmap for improving culture across the construction industry.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings in this report are based on confidential interviews with 50 senior construction leaders, representing a total of 1,354 years of combined industry experience.

## KEY INFORMATION

### WHAT 50 LEADERS TOLD US

The EPIC Construction Leadership Report 2026 provides a rare inside view of leadership and culture in the construction industry.

Through confidential interviews with 50 senior leaders, combined with national research and legislative analysis, this report reveals the cultural and leadership pressures shaping the future of the industry.

These conversations provide a clear message: Construction's biggest risks are no longer purely technical, they are human.

Leadership capability, psychological safety, workforce wellbeing, and culture are now critical determinants of performance, retention, and safety outcomes.

This report holds up an honest mirror to the industry and identifies practical pathways for change.

### WHO WE SPOKE TO

The report draws on insights from 50 senior leaders across the construction sector, including:

- CEOs
- Project Directors
- Site Managers
- Safety Leaders
- Engineers
- Quantity Surveyors
- Academics
- Tradespeople
- Estimators
- HR and Workforce Specialists

Every participant had a minimum of 20 years industry experience across:

- Infrastructure & Major Projects
- Commercial construction
- Energy
- Residential building
- Property development
- Civil

## THE INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE

### LEADERSHIP STUDY

 **50** Construction leaders interviewed globally

 **1,354** Years of experience

 **49%** Interviewees were female

### MENTAL HEALTH REALITY

 **1 in 2** Experience a mental health condition <sup>3</sup>.

 **75%** Higher suicide rate of male workers <sup>3</sup>.

 **3 X** Suicidal ideation among FIFO/DIDO workers


### INDUSTRY PRESSURES

 **45** Construction worker fatalities in Australia 2023

 **12%** Serious workers' compensation claims

 **300K** Projected workforce shortfall by 2027 <sup>6</sup>.

### INDUSTRY PRESSURES

 **11%** Women in the global construction workforce

 **3-4%** Women in frontline site roles <sup>8</sup>.

 **36%** Occupations currently in shortage <sup>8</sup>.

*Data derived from 50 leader interviews and cited national research. Full interview list at Appendix A.*

# THEMES RAISED

Percentage of interviewees who raised each theme **unprompted** during their interview. Across the interviews, leaders consistently identified a set of cultural, workforce and leadership challenges shaping the future of the construction industry.

## LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY GAP

**94%** Technical experts are being promoted into leadership roles without training in leading people.

## SAFETY AS THEATRE

**84%** Leaders highlighted a persistent gap between documented safety systems and lived safety culture.

## GENDER INEQUITY

**86%** Identified gender inequity and exclusion as persistent industry challenges.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

**88%** Many workers do not feel safe speaking up about issues due to perceived career risk.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND BURNOUT

**91%** High workloads, project pressure and Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) conditions are contributing to growing mental health challenges.

## GENERATIONAL RETENTION

**78%** Younger workers are increasingly rejecting traditional industry norms around work and leadership.

## WORKFORCE PIPELINE

**72%** The industry faces ongoing challenges attracting and retaining the workforce needed for future projects.

## MIGRANTS UNDER UTILISED

**68%** Skilled migrant workers are often underutilised due to barriers in recognition and integration.

## PSYCHOSOCIAL COMPLIANCE

**65%** Organisations are still working to understand how to effectively manage psychosocial risks.

## DRUGS, ALCOHOL & CULTURE

**61%** Substance use was identified by some leaders as a symptom of deeper industry pressures.

# METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH APPROACH

The EPIC Construction Leadership Report 2026 is based on qualitative interviews with 50 senior construction leaders, conducted between March and September 2025.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Participants were selected to represent a broad cross-section of the construction industry, including:

- CEOs
- Project Directors
- Site Managers
- Safety leaders
- Engineers
- Academics
- Tradespeople
- HR and workforce specialists

Participants had a **minimum of 20 years' industry experience**, representing over 1,300+ years of combined leadership experience across the construction sector.

## GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

While the majority of interviewees were based in Australia, the study also included leaders with experience working in:

- Canada
- United States
- United Kingdom
- Middle East

This provided additional perspective on how leadership and culture challenges appear across different construction markets.

*To protect the integrity of responses, all interviews were conducted confidentially and individual participants are not identified.*

## INTERVIEW METHOD

Each participant took part in a confidential, semi-structured interview, designed to explore leadership, culture and workforce challenges across the industry.

Leaders were not prompted with predefined topics. Instead, interviews focused on open discussion about the challenges they believe are shaping the future of the construction workforce.

This approach allowed themes to emerge organically, providing a clearer picture of the issues leaders themselves consider most significant.

## THEME IDENTIFICATION

Interview responses were analysed to identify recurring themes raised across discussions. Where multiple leaders raised the same issue independently, these were recorded and quantified as theme frequency, representing the percentage of interviewees who raised each topic unprompted.

This approach highlights not only the issues present in the industry, but also which issues leaders consider most pressing.

## SUPPORTING DATA

Interview findings were cross-referenced with national workforce, safety and wellbeing data to provide additional context on industry trends.

This combination of leader testimony and national data allows the report to present both lived experience and broader workforce insights.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE PEOPLE AND CULTURE GAP

WHY TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE IS NO LONGER ENOUGH

### WHEN A GREAT TRADESPERSON BECOMES A LEADER OVERNIGHT

On a wet Monday morning at the edge of a major infrastructure project, a newly promoted supervisor walks the site in his new role for the first time.

Last week he was the crew's go-to leading hand: the one who could solve a crane lift problem, talk to the client and jump on the tools when the pour ran late.

Today his hard hat is a different colour. The expectations have quietly changed.

No one has sat him down to explain psychosocial risk. No one has shown him how to de-escalate a conflict between a senior rigger and a young apprentice. No one has taught him how to respond when a crew member arrives clearly distressed.

Instead he receives a laptop, a stack of online modules and a clear message:

**“You're responsible now.  
Don't get it wrong.”**

This story ran through many of our interviews in different forms.

Highly capable technical professionals promoted into leadership roles with little preparation for the human side of the job. They know how to build the bridge.

***No one has ever taught them how to build trust.***



# SECTION 1.1

## HOW CONSTRUCTION CREATES ITS LEADERS

Across our 50 interviews one pattern appeared so consistently it could almost be written into industry operating procedures:

- Deliver technically
- Hit your program
- Be tough under pressure
- Then you are given a team

*Several leaders described moving into supervisory roles almost overnight.*

The assumption embedded in this approach is that if you can manage a program, you can manage human beings. That assumption, our interviewees made very clear, is wrong.

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD

Role	Sector	Experience	Key Insight
Senior Project Manager	Infrastructure	25 years	"I went from managing drawings to managing people, but nothing in my preparation changed."
HSE Leader	Commercial Construction	28 years	"I learnt leadership by trial and error, which means I learnt it on other people's bodies and mental health."
Site Supervisor	Civil Infrastructure	20 years	"I barked at both of them in front of everyone. Three weeks later one left the project."
Project Manager	Building	22 years	"I thought it was a performance problem. Later I realised he was going through a marriage breakdown."

What stands out across these stories is not incompetence. It is regret.

Many leaders reflected that they were trying to do the right thing, without ever being shown how.

Nearly every leader said some version of the same thing:

**"No one ever taught me how to lead."**

# SECTION 1.2

## WHAT THE LAW NOW REQUIRES

This leadership gap is no longer only a people-management issue. It is now a legal and regulatory risk.

Under Australia's harmonised Work Health and Safety <sup>20</sup> laws, organisations must ensure the health and safety of workers.

Importantly, health includes psychological health, not only physical safety.

Several jurisdictions strengthened these obligations between 2022 and 2023, formally recognising psychosocial hazards alongside physical safety risks.

For frontline supervisors this shift is significant.

Leadership behaviours including how conflict is managed, how workloads are set, how mistakes are handled, are now recognised as safety issues.

***Supervisors are no longer delivery managers. They are frontline psychosocial safety controllers.***

**"We used to treat culture as an HR topic and psychosocial risk as a wellbeing initiative. The law is now catching up with what workers have always known: the way you are led is a safety issue. If your supervisor is unpredictable or punitive, that is a hazard."**

**HSE Executive | Major Projects | 38 years**

## SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

Model Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work

Hazards identified include:



High job demands



Poor support



Bullying and harassment



Remote or isolated work



Poor workplace relationships



Poor organisational justice



Traumatic events



Poor physical environment



Violence and aggression

# SECTION 1.3

## CULTURAL HARM AS A PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARD

*Cultural harm rarely comes from a single incident.*

More often it is the cumulative effect of behaviours and norms that leave people feeling unsupported, excluded or unsafe.

In regulatory terms these behaviours often align directly with recognised psychosocial hazards:



Bullying



Harassment



Discrimination



Poor  
workplace  
relationships



Unreasonable  
job demands

*For workers the experience is more personal.*

It can mean going home exhausted because you never know when you will be criticised publicly.

It can mean staying quiet about unsafe practices because the last person who spoke up was labelled a problem.

It can mean being the only woman or migrant worker on site and constantly feeling like an outsider.

**"It was not one big thing. It was a thousand small cuts. The constant assumption I was the admin, not the engineer. The joke emails. The after-work drinks where decisions were made and I was never invited. None of those things alone would meet the threshold for a complaint. Together, they shaped my whole sense of whether I belonged."**

**Senior Engineer | Infrastructure | 33 years**

# SECTION 1.4

## THE COST: SAFETY, RETENTION AND REPUTATION

Safe Work Australia data confirms that despite decades of investment, construction remains one of Australia's most hazardous industries

Many of these projects operate with extensive safety systems and documentation.

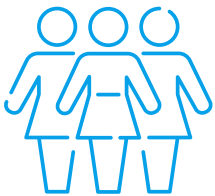
*The issue is not paperwork.  
It is culture.*



## WORKFORCE IMPACT

Infrastructure Australia's 2025 Market Capacity Report projects a shortage of 300,000 construction workers by 2027.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time the industry continues to lose workers from groups it needs most:



Women



Younger workers



Internationally trained professionals

*Poor leadership culture drives attrition.  
Attrition deepens the skills crisis.*

# SECTION 1.5

## WHAT GOOD LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE

The leaders who stood out as positive examples were not those with the most impressive technical CVs.

They were those who had learned to blend technical competence with human competence. They knew the job well enough to understand genuine constraints, and knew human behaviour well enough to challenge false ones. They used systems as tools, not shields.

They showed visible care:

- Walking the job
- Knowing names
- Asking about families
- Drawing a clear line around unacceptable behaviour

**"We would not let someone design a bridge without an accredited engineering degree and supervision. Yet we let people manage 50 human beings off the back of: you've been here a while and you're good at your job. That is not a leadership system. That is wishful thinking."**

**Company Director | Civil Construction | 35 years**

## GALLUP'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP REPORT: WHAT FOLLOWERS WANT

Gallup's <sup>17</sup> report found that regardless of country, sector, or demographic, people consistently need four things from their leaders.



Hope



Trust



Compassion



Stability

In the day-to-day of a construction site, this looks like a supervisor who explains why a change is happening, not just what and when.

A project manager who keeps their commitments and admits mistakes.

A foreman who notices when someone is off and checks in with genuine concern.

# CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

✓	Construction's leadership development model remains fundamentally broken: technical excellence is rewarded with people responsibility, but the skills to handle that responsibility are rarely taught.
✓	94% of interviewees raised the leadership capability gap as a systemic, industry-wide issue.
✓	Under current WHS law <sup>19</sup> , leaders are now frontline psychosocial safety controllers. Under-prepared supervisors are not just a culture risk. They are a legal liability.
✓	Cultural harm is cumulative, difficult to document, and directly linked to attrition, mental health decline, and safety failures.
✓	A 300,000-worker shortfall by 2027 <sup>6</sup> makes retaining the people you have just as urgent as attracting new ones.

## LOOKING AHEAD

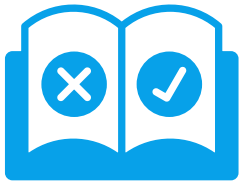
The leadership capability gap creates the conditions for many of the issues explored in the chapters that follow. When leaders are underprepared for the human dimensions of their role:



Safety becomes documentation



Culture becomes tolerance



Workers learn quickly what the real rules are

**Chapter 2 explores the growing gap between safety on paper and safety in practice.**

## KEY REFERENCES — CHAPTER 1

Safe Work Australia. (2024). *Work-related traumatic injury fatalities, Australia 2023*. Canberra: Safe Work Australia. <sup>1</sup>

Safe Work Australia. (2023). *Model Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work*. Canberra: Safe Work Australia. <sup>2</sup>

Infrastructure Australia. (2025). *2025 Infrastructure Market Capacity Report*. Sydney: Infrastructure Australia. <sup>7</sup>

Gallup. (2023). *Global Leadership Report: What Followers Want*. Washington DC: Gallup. <sup>17</sup>

# CHAPTER 2

## SAFETY AS PAPERWORK VS SAFETY AS RELATIONSHIPS

WHY WORLD-CLASS SYSTEMS STILL CO-EXIST WITH HARM

### OPENING INSIGHT

On paper, many construction organisations appear to be safety success stories.



ISO-  
certified  
systems.



Daily pre-  
start  
meetings



Safe Work  
Method  
Statements



Zero Harm  
slogans on  
site  
billboards

And yet workers are still getting hurt, traumatised or killed.

**84%**

Described  
same pattern

*Major effort invested in safety documentation,  
while the everyday experience on site still felt  
precarious.*

**"We have got world-class  
systems and we still have harm.  
That tells me the answer is not  
more paperwork."**

**HSE Director  
Major Projects  
33 years**

**"When relationships were good,  
incidents were low. When  
relationships broke down,  
everything else failed, no  
matter how good our  
documentation looked."**

**HSE Specialist  
Major Projects  
45 years**

# SECTION 2.1

## WHEN SAFETY BECOMES DOCUMENTATION

Documentation plays an important role in identifying hazards and demonstrating that controls exist. No leader interviewed suggested that procedures are unnecessary. What they questioned was a different assumption:

*More paperwork does not automatically mean more safety.*

Several leaders described environments where documentation had grown so extensive that it became detached from day-to-day work on site.

- Procedures were signed but rarely discussed.
- Risk assessments were completed but not internalised.
- Pre-start meetings became routines rather than conversations.

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD

Role	Sector	Experience	Key Insight
Senior Project Manager	Civil Construction	27 years	“Binders of procedures. At some point people stopped reading and just signed.”
HSEQ Executive	Infrastructure	30 years	“What went wrong was usually relational. Someone didn’t feel able to question a decision.”
Project Director	Commercial Construction	25 years	“Zero Harm banners everywhere, but near-miss reporting was treated as a nuisance.”

Many leaders referred to this phenomenon as **“safety theatre”**. They defined this term as highly visible rituals that signal commitment, without addressing the cultural conditions that actually prevent harm.

Examples included:

- rushed pre-start meetings
- audits focused on document presence
- incident statistics prioritised over learning

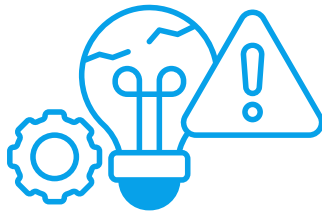
# SECTION 2.2

## WHAT SAFE PROJECTS ACTUALLY FEEL LIKE

When leaders were asked to describe the safest projects they had worked on, very few started by listing documents. Instead they described a culture.



A workplace where people could raise concerns



Where mistakes were treated as learning opportunities



Where speaking up did not carry career risk.

**"He was the first person who ever said to me, if you are uncomfortable, I want to know before you step out there, not after. And he meant it. We had fewer near misses on that job than any other I have worked on."**

**HSE Specialist | FIFO Major Projects | 20 years**

In these environments:

- workers stepped in when peers were at risk
- crews challenged unsafe practices early
- near-miss reporting increased
- supervisors were trusted

**"Same company, same systems, totally different results. The second site had fewer injuries and hit its milestones more consistently. The difference was the supervisor."**

**HSE Director | FIFO Infrastructure | 33 years**

***Safety systems still existed, but they supported conversations rather than replacing them.***

# SECTION 2.3

## WHEN RELATIONSHIPS FAIL

Several interviewees described moments where safety decisions were shaped by relationships rather than procedures.

One site engineer recalled watching a crane lift proceed in winds clearly above threshold.

He considered speaking up. But the foreman was already frustrated about delays.

The lift went ahead. Nothing went wrong that day. He still thinks about it.

A health and safety practitioner described an incident where a worker suffered a serious hand injury and the initial management response was to ask why he had not followed the procedure, rather than examining the system that made the incident possible.

In environments where people fear blame or ridicule, hazards often go unreported.

*Small issues remain hidden until they become major incidents.*

**"The message to everyone watching was clear: keep your head down, because if you get hurt, they will come after you."**

**HSE Specialist  
Construction and Resources  
20 years**



# SECTION 2.4

## SAFETY AS A LEGAL DUTY TO THE WHOLE PERSON

For many leaders, the shift toward recognising psychological safety came through difficult experience.

One senior infrastructure leader described a turning point:

**"For years we treated mental health as an EAP brochure on the lunchroom wall. Then we lost a worker to suicide. The coroner's report mentioned workload, job insecurity, and bullying. At that moment it became impossible to pretend these things were outside safety."**

**Workplace Safety & Wellbeing Specialist  
Infrastructure | 22 years**

***The traditional separation between physical safety and workplace culture is no longer legally or operationally sustainable.***

## EPIC Note: Safety Culture

EPIC offers whole-of-site safety culture assessments that examine both the documentary and relational dimensions of safety.

If safety metrics appear strong but near-miss reporting is low, this may indicate a gap between formal systems and lived experience on site.

More information: [www.epicservices.group](http://www.epicservices.group)

## SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

Model Code of Practice <sup>(2)</sup>: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work

Hazards identified include:



High job demands



Poor support



Bullying and harassment



Remote or isolated work



Poor workplace relationships



Poor organisational justice



Traumatic events



Poor physical environment



Violence and aggression

# CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

✓	84% of leaders described a persistent gap between safety documentation and lived safety experience on site.
✓	Real safety follows relationships, not paperwork. Supervisors who are trusted generate better safety outcomes than systems that are technically perfect.
✓	Safety theatre, visible compliance rituals without cultural substance, actively suppresses the hazard reporting that prevents harm.
✓	Australian WHS law <sup>19</sup> . now treats psychological harm with the same legal standing as physical injury. Leaders who have not updated their understanding of their obligations are carrying unexamined risk.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The safety chapter reveals an industry that has invested heavily in controlling physical risk while underinvesting in the relational and psychological conditions that determine whether those controls are actually used.

The same relational deficit drives the industry's most persistent gender equity failure.

***Chapter 3 examines what women in construction are actually experiencing, and what it is costing everyone.***



# CHAPTER 3

## FROM TESTING WOMEN TO TRUSTING WOMEN

### THE CULTURAL AUDIT CONSTRUCTION KEEPS FAILING

#### OPENING INSIGHT

Picture a young engineer walking into her first site office. She is excited. A little nervous. Keen to prove she belongs. She opens the door and stops. Every wall is covered in centrefold pornography.

The message is subtle in one sense and deafening in another:

*This space was built for men.  
You are here on someone else's terms.*

One senior leader described this experience early in her career. It was not presented as a mistake. It was presented as a test.



How much would she tolerate?



How quiet would she stay?



How badly did she want the job?

Variations of this story appeared repeatedly across the interviews.

# 86%

Raised gender equity as an unresolved challenge in the industry.

# SECTION 3.1

## THE TEST BEHIND THE WELCOME

Under Australia's Work Health and Safety <sup>20</sup> framework, sexual and gender-based harassment are recognised as psychosocial hazards capable of causing significant psychological and physical harm.

The Model Code of Practice on Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment explicitly frames these behaviours as workplace safety risks, not HR issues.

Yet many women described a different reality on site:

***Cultural tests often carry more weight than legal obligations.***

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD

Role	Sector	Experience	Key Insight
Senior Female Leader	Commercial Construction	22 years	"An average week? Twenty microaggressions, minimum. None of the comments on their own seem bad enough to complain about. But they never stop. That is the problem."
Construction Professional	Civil Infrastructure	20 years	"My most challenging experiences are the various harassment encounters I have had on sites. Do I speak up? I could lose my job, I could lose my contract, but I have to say something."
General Manager	Building and Construction	24 years	"He literally put his jacket on me and said, you look like you would take care of this for me. I was a general manager at the time."
Female Senior Leader	Infrastructure	26 years	"If a woman makes a complaint, she might be protected on paper, but she will often pay for it socially and professionally."

# SECTION 3.2

## THE EVERYDAY GRIND: A SCALE PROBLEM

Most of the harm women described was not one dramatic incident. It was the accumulation of everyday interactions.

- Being asked to take minutes in meetings where they are the project lead.
- Being mistaken for administrative staff when they are engineers.
- Watching junior male staff treated as decision-makers.

Over time these small signals accumulate into a powerful message:

*You do not fully belong here.*

## INDUSTRY DATA

According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency<sup>11</sup>:

**11-15%**



Representation of women in construction

**3-4%**



Women in frontline site roles<sup>8</sup>.

**16.2%**



Women in management and professional roles

Despite making up nearly half of Australia's total workforce, women remain significantly under-represented across the construction sector.

## RESEARCH INSIGHT

A study by RMIT University found that gendered workplace culture and informal exclusion were among the strongest drivers pushing women out of construction careers.

These include:

- exclusion from informal decision networks
- everyday microaggressions
- limited progression opportunities

Source: Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). (2024). *Gender Equality Scorecard: Construction Industry*. WGEA, Canberra.<sup>11</sup>

# SECTION 3.3

## THE RETENTION CRISIS IS THE REAL CRISIS

Australia faces a projected shortage of 300,000 construction workers by 2027<sup>6</sup>:

Industry leaders frequently speak about attracting more women into the sector.

But recruitment <sup>18</sup> alone does not solve the problem. Retention does.

**"We keep saying we need 50,000 more women in construction. But it is not just about getting them in. It is about making sure they are not chewed up and spat out by the culture once they arrive."**

**Industry Advocate, Women in Trades | National | 20 years**

A University of Sydney <sup>14</sup> study found women were 30% more likely than men to leave residential construction roles due to workplace culture, limited career progression, and inflexible conditions.

A female tradesperson experienced severe bullying and harassment in her own carpentry apprenticeship, described the retention challenge directly:

**30%**

Women are more likely to leave construction

**"We can see the numbers climbing on recruitment. But the retention piece for me, keeping women in their trade to get their qualification, is by far the biggest challenge.**

**And it is because of all the things I experienced. The loneliness, the otherness, the bullying, the harassment.**

**The things that still exist have not been addressed in the same way."**

**Project Manager | Commercial Construction | 29 years**

***The loneliness, exclusion and harassment experienced by many women, remain major factors driving attrition.***

# SECTION 3.4

## HARASSMENT, RETALIATION AND THE LAW

Recent legal reforms have significantly strengthened employer obligations.

In Victoria, the Worker Safety Legislative Package 2021 and subsequent amendments to the Equal Opportunity Act <sup>22</sup> strengthened protections further.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission have been given expanded powers to investigate systemic discrimination.

Queensland's Work Health and Safety Act 2011 <sup>23</sup>, as amended in 2023, explicitly includes psychological health within the general duty provisions.

**"I have been involved in a situation where we had a harassment claim and the outcome was a deed of release with a non-disparagement clause. The perpetrator stayed. The victim left. Nobody was any wiser. Nobody was safer. And the same behaviour happened again six months later."**

**HR Advisor | Construction & Engineering | 20 years**

Non-disclosure agreements used to silence complaints, are increasingly viewed as legal and reputational liabilities rather than protections.

## SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT 1984

Under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 <sup>21</sup>, organisations now have a positive duty<sup>5</sup> to prevent:



Sexual Harassment



Sexual Discrimination



Unlawful conduct

***This is not a reactive obligation.  
It requires employers to proactively prevent harm.***

## EPIC Note: Gender Equity and Culture

EPIC's consulting and training work includes gender equity assessments, harassment prevention frameworks, and positive duty implementation support for construction organisations.

More information: [www.epicservices.group](http://www.epicservices.group)

# SECTION 3.5

## WHAT SAFE PROJECTS ACTUALLY FEEL LIKE

Despite the difficult stories, leaders also described what works.

The supervisors and executives who created positive environments consistently demonstrated a few behaviours:



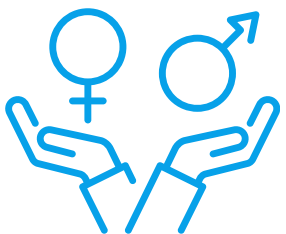
Believing women's experiences the first time



Intervening quickly when boundaries were crossed



Normalising flexible work arrangements



Treating gender equity as part of safety culture

**"I realised I had been treating my female staff like they were lucky to be here. When I actually sat down and listened, it became obvious: we are lucky to have them."**

**Productivity and Safety Specialist | Infrastructure | 33 years**

# CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

✓	86% of interviewees raised gender equity as an unresolved industry challenge.
✓	Women leave construction at significantly higher rates than men, with workplace culture cited as the primary driver.
✓	The industry's challenge <sup>8</sup> is not only recruitment <sup>18</sup> . It is retention.
✓	Positive duty obligations under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 <sup>5</sup> , <sup>21</sup> require employers to proactively prevent harassment, not simply respond to complaints.
✓	Non-disclosure agreements used in harassment settlements are increasingly a legal liability, not a legal protection.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The gender equity challenge highlights a deeper issue.

Construction continues to lose talented professionals it has already recruited and trained. A similar pattern is emerging with another group critical to the industry's future.

***Chapter 4 examines the experience of migrant workers and internationally trained professionals and how their under-utilisation is deepening the skills crisis.***



# CHAPTER 4

## MIGRANT AND INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

ESSENTIAL, YET LEAST SUPPORTED

### OPENING INSIGHT

Stand at the gate of almost any major construction project in Australia today and you will notice it immediately.

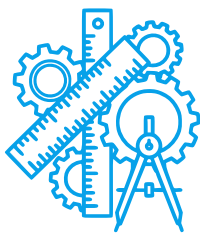
- Different accents at the turnstiles.
- Conversations switching between English and first languages.
- Video calls home before pre-start because time zones do not care about shift rosters.

Migrant and internationally trained professionals are now a core part of the construction workforce.

Across our interviews they appeared in every role:



Engineers



Site Supervisors



HSEQ Professionals



Consultants



Senior Leaders

*Back home I was a senior engineer.  
Here I was told to start as a labourer.*

When combined with Australia's projected 300,000 construction workforce shortfall by 2027 <sup>6</sup>, this becomes one of the most operationally urgent issues in this report.

# 68%

Raised the under-utilisation of migrant workers as a specific issue.

# SECTION 4.1

## STARTING FROM ZERO. WHEN EXPERIENCE DOES NOT TRANSFER

Many internationally trained professionals arrive in Australia with extensive experience.

- Major infrastructure projects.
- Large engineering teams.
- Senior leadership roles.

**Yet they frequently encounter an expectation to start again from the bottom of the hierarchy.**

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD

Role	Sector	Experience	Key Insight
Architect and Property Developer	Building and Construction	22 years	"Second day on site, a big bloke said, who are you? You are the new junior coordinator. You know nothing. I am not going to listen to you. After six months, I gave up and said to the founder: the construction industry is just not for me."
HSEQ Leader	Civil Infrastructure	22 years	"He told me: I saw it, but my English is not good and last time I spoke up, the supervisor rolled his eyes. So this time I stayed quiet. That is not a language problem. That is a leadership problem."
Site Manager	Resources and Infrastructure	20 years	"He said: I know we are meant to report everything, but my visa is tied to this company. If I complain about my foreman and they decide I am trouble, I could lose everything."
FIFO Worker	Remote Construction	20 years	"You finish a 12-hour shift and go back to a donga where your family is a pixelated face on a screen. If the culture on site is good, you can cope. If it is toxic, it gets dark very quickly."

## NATIONAL WORKFORCE DATA

According to Engineers Australia (2024)<sup>9</sup>:

- Nearly half of overseas-born engineers in Australia are not working in engineering roles.
- This occurs despite tens of thousands of engineering vacancies nationwide.

The contradiction is clear: Australia faces a major infrastructure pipeline, yet under-utilises a skilled workforce already present.

Source: Engineers Australia. (2024). *Engineering Employment Report 2024*. Engineers Australia, Canberra. <sup>9</sup>.

# SECTION 4.2

## VISA INSECURITY AS A SILENT CONTROL MECHANISM

Several leaders described a structural issue affecting migrant workers.

***The implicit or explicit linking of employment continuation and visa status to compliance with, rather than challenge of, poor practices***

This creates a powerful disincentive to speak up about workplace concerns.

Workers who might otherwise report:



Safety Risks



Unpaid Overtime



Bullying or harassment

Remain silent if they believe raising concerns could threaten their visa status.

## WHY THIS MATTERS FOR LEADERS

Standard “speak up” messaging is not enough. If workers believe speaking up could jeopardise their visa, posters and reporting channels will not change behaviour.

For organisations that rely heavily on migrant labour, this introduces a specific leadership risk:

***Safety systems assume workers feel safe to report hazards. Visa insecurity can undermine that assumption.***

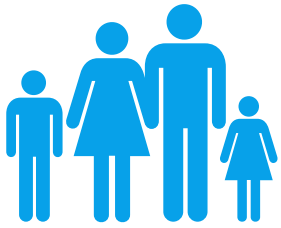
Board and executive oversight should therefore include migrant worker voice as a specific cultural and safety risk indicator.

# SECTION 4.3

## THE MENTAL HEALTH DIMENSION

Migration is a disruption of identity, community, and belonging as much as an economic decision.

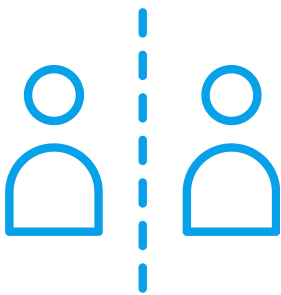
Several leaders described the additional pressures migrant workers face on FIFO and remote projects, including:



Separation from family and support networks



Language barriers



Cultural isolation

In environments where workplace culture is supportive, these pressures can be managed.

When workplace culture is hostile or dismissive, the mental health impact can escalate quickly.

**Real leadership checks in, not checks up. Listen, care, support, that's communication that matters.**

**Cost and Commercial Advisor | Major Projects | 25 years**

# SECTION 4.4

## WHAT BETTER LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE

The organisations leaders described as successfully integrating internationally trained professionals tended to follow a few simple practices.

Rather than asking workers to start from zero, they:

- recognised overseas experience during recruitment and onboarding
- mapped international project experience to equivalent Australian roles
- supported communication through visual and verbal explanations
- challenged accent-based dismissiveness immediately

*They also invested in peer networks, not just policies.*

**"We stopped talking about migrant inclusion as the right thing to do and started talking about it as the smart thing to do. It is both. But when you show the board how much risk you carry if a third of your workforce does not feel safe to speak, suddenly the conversation becomes urgent."**

**Executive Leader | Property & Construction | 20 years**

For many organisations the shift came when leaders recognised the operational implications.

If a significant portion of the workforce does not feel safe to speak up, the organisation carries hidden safety and productivity risk.

## EPIC Note: Diversity and Inclusion

*EPIC's Diversity and Inclusion consulting works with organisations to assess and redesign their onboarding, career pathways, and cultural practices for internationally trained professionals. This is not a compliance exercise. It is a productivity and retention intervention.*

More information: [www.epicservices.group](http://www.epicservices.group)

# CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY

✓	68% of interviewees raised migrant worker under-utilisation as a specific and underaddressed industry problem.
✓	Nearly half of overseas-born engineers in Australia are not working in engineering roles despite critical workforce shortages (Engineers Australia, 2024).
✓	Visa insecurity functions as a systemic silencer of safety and workplace concerns, creating specific and under-managed psychosocial and compliance risk.
✓	The FIFO and remote site context amplifies migrant worker isolation, producing mental health risk that is rarely visible until it becomes a crisis.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Migrant workers represent one of the clearest examples of a broader pattern across the construction industry.

People who are essential to the sector's future are often made to feel peripheral to its present.

The psychological cost of this position can be profound.

**Chapter 5 explores the industry's most urgent human consequence: the mental health and suicide crisis affecting construction workers across Australia.**



# CHAPTER 5

## THE MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY

WHAT CONSTRUCTION IS DOING TO ITS PEOPLE AND WHAT LEADERS MUST DO DIFFERENTLY

### OPENING INSIGHT

There is a number every construction leader should know.

*One construction worker in Australia dies by suicide every two days.<sup>3</sup>*

**75%**

Higher

Male construction workers experience a suicide rate approximately 75% higher than the general male population.<sup>3</sup>

**3X**

For FIFO and Drive-In-Drive-Out (**DIDO**) workers in Western Australia, suicidal thoughts occur at three times the national average.

These are not abstract statistics.

They are colleagues, fathers, sons, daughters.

Across interviews, one conclusion emerged consistently:

*The mental health crisis is not occurring despite construction culture. It is occurring because of it.*

**91%**

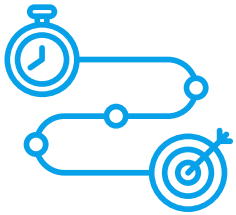
Raised mental health as a major industry challenge.

# SECTION 5.1

## THE CULTURE THAT FUELS THE CRISIS

When leaders examined the root causes of mental health harm in construction, the patterns were consistent.

The most common factors identified were:



Unrealistic project timelines



Relentless work schedules



Pressure to deliver at any cost



Workplace cultures where vulnerability is treated as weakness



Leadership messaging that promotes wellbeing but punishes absence

*For many workers, these pressures accumulate over years.*

When safety, quality and wellbeing compete with schedule pressure, people become the variable that absorbs the impact.

**"You go and do a root cause analysis of why we lose a person every two days. You will find stress. Workplace stress. Often young people, young families. There is a lot of stress being put on people to deliver projects to a timeline which does not make sense, a timeline which is absolutely fictitious because somebody has to cut a ribbon on a certain day. And because we have been given those timelines by people who have never delivered actual projects, safety and quality become the victims. And whenever safety becomes a victim, you lose a person."**

**Mental Health Advocate | Construction Industry | 20 years**

# SECTION 5.2

## SUBSTANCE USE: A SYMPTOM, NOT A DISCIPLINE PROBLEM

One dimension of the mental health crisis rarely discussed openly is its connection to drug and alcohol use.

Industry specialists interviewed were direct about the scale of the issue.

**"I have seen it in every sector I have worked in: tradies coming to work impaired, young guys using to manage anxiety or pain or just to get through the week. Australia wastes \$80B on drugs annually. The methamphetamine epidemic is accelerating. If you run a construction business and you do not have a drug and alcohol policy that goes beyond half a page, you do not have a system. You have a liability."**

**Drug and Alcohol Prevention Specialist | Construction Industry | 22 years**

Clinical research consistently links substance use in high-stress industries with:

- burnout
- untreated trauma
- chronic stress
- social isolation

Construction workers are among the highest risk occupational groups for alcohol-related harm in Australia.

**Research indicates that workplace culture and pressure are key contributing factors.**

Leaders making progress in this area are moving beyond purely disciplinary approaches and combining:



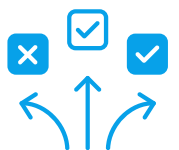
Drug and alcohol testing



Early support interventions



Supervisor awareness training



Treatment pathways

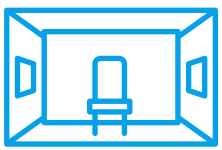
This approach treats substance issues as health risks first and conduct issues second.

# SECTION 5.3

## FIFO: THE SPECIFIC BURDEN

The FIFO and DIDO lifestyle creates a specific set of mental health risks that construction has been too slow to address.

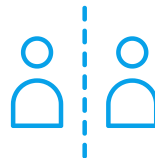
Workers described environments where normal support systems disappear. Instead of home, community and routine, workers return after long shifts to:



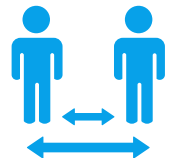
Dongas



Remote camps



Isolation from family



Limited social outlets

Research by the University of Western Australia (2024)<sup>16</sup> found:

***FIFO construction workers report suicidal ideation at three times the national average.***

The challenge is unique:

- while on swing, workers are isolated from family
- when home, they anticipate returning to site

This creates a continuous psychological cycle.

**"You come off a 12-hour shift, it is 40 degrees, you are exhausted, and there is a wet mess with cheap beer. That is your social outlet. That is where you vent. That is where you hear the gossip and figure out if your job is safe. No wonder people use alcohol as a pressure valve, because there is nothing else."**

**Safety Professional | Remote Construction | 20 years**

# SECTION 5.4

## WHAT EFFECTIVE LEADERS ACTUALLY DO

Across interviews, the leaders improving mental health outcomes followed several consistent practices.

***They treat mental health like physical safety, with structured risk identification, defined controls, and regular review.***

This includes:



Structured  
psychosocial  
risk  
assessments



Training  
supervisors  
to recognise  
distress



Clear  
escalation  
pathways  
for support



Realistic project  
planning that  
includes  
recovery time

***Critically, they also model openness themselves.***

**"I said in a site meeting: I have been struggling lately. I am tired. I had a hard couple of weeks. And I could see the room shift. Three blokes came up to me after and said they were having a hard time too. None of them would have brought it up otherwise. That is all it takes sometimes: someone at the top going first."**

**General Manager | Civil Construction | 23 years**

***When leaders speak openly about pressure, it signals to the workforce that seeking support is acceptable.***

# SECTION 5.5

## THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT OF TAKING WELLBEING SERIOUSLY

The financial case for investing in mental health is now well documented.

A 2024 analysis by PwC<sup>12</sup> and Beyond Blue<sup>12</sup> found:



Untreated mental health conditions cost Australian workplaces:



The economic case for genuine investment is not complicated. What is complicated is the cultural shift required to make that investment land.

For boards and executives, this reframes the issue.

Mental health is not simply a wellbeing program.

***It is a performance and productivity<sup>10</sup> issue.***

# SECTION 5.6

## SUPPORT RESOURCES FOR CONSTRUCTION LEADERS

Several national organisations provide evidence-based support for employers seeking to strengthen mental health outcomes.



### **Beyond Blue**

Offers free, government-funded tools, training modules, and assessment resources specifically designed for Australian employers.

[mentallyhealthyworkplaces.gov.au](https://mentallyhealthyworkplaces.gov.au)



### **Suicide Prevention Australia**

The national peak body, offers a workplace competency framework and resources for high-risk industries including construction.

[suicidepreventionaust.org](https://suicidepreventionaust.org)



### **TIACS**

a professional, free text and call counselling service offering mental health support to Australia's blue collar community.

[tiacs.org](https://tiacs.org)



### **R U OK?**

Offers free workplace conversation resources focused on normalising mental health discussion.

[ruok.org.au](https://ruok.org.au)



### **Black Dog Institute**

Provides research-backed tools for identifying and managing mental health risks at work.

[blackdoginstitute.org.au/workplace](https://blackdoginstitute.org.au/workplace)

## **EPIC Note: Psychosocial Hazards Training**

EEPIC delivers psychosocial hazards training designed specifically for the construction industry. The helps companies identify psychosocial risks, meet WHS legal obligations, train supervisors to recognise risks and build a genuine speak-up culture.

More information: [www.epicservices.group](https://www.epicservices.group)

# CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY

✓	91% of interviewees raised mental health as a significant, inadequately addressed challenge.
✓	A construction worker dies by suicide every two days in Australia. Male construction workers face a suicide rate 75% higher <sup>3</sup> than the general male population.
✓	Substance use in construction is primarily a mental health symptom, not a discipline problem. Treatment approaches that reflect this distinction get better outcomes.
✓	FIFO and DIDO workers face a specific and well-documented double-bind of mental health risk that requires targeted responses beyond general EAP provision.
✓	The ROI on evidence-based mental health investment is \$5.80 per dollar. This is not a cost. It is a performance investment.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Mental health crises rarely occur in isolation. They are deeply connected to another issue raised repeatedly in this report: the culture of silence.

Workers struggling with pressure, bullying or harassment often remain silent when speaking up feels unsafe.

**Chapter 6 examines how construction culture punishes truth-telling and what leaders must do to change it.**



# CHAPTER 6

## SILENCE, RETALIATION AND THE COURAGE TO SPEAK UP WHEN TRUTH-TELLING COSTS TOO MUCH

### OPENING INSIGHT

There is a shadow side to construction culture that rarely appears in industry publications, conferences or awards.

*It is the pattern of people who saw something,  
said something, and paid for it.*

Workers pushed out after raising safety concerns.

Women sidelined after reporting harassment.

Leaders managed out after challenging unethical decisions.

Junior staff told to find another job after questioning budgets or timelines.

Across interviews for this report, this pattern surfaced repeatedly.

This chapter examines the culture of silence that results. Not occasional reluctance to raise concerns. But systematic silence that protects poor behaviour and discourages truth-telling.

*When workers see what happens to those who speak up, they learn  
quickly what the real rules are.*

**88%**

Described workplaces  
where speaking up  
carries real career risk.

# SECTION 6.1

## WHY PEOPLE STAY QUIET

Across interviews, the reasons workers remain silent were remarkably consistent. People do not stay quiet because they lack courage. They stay quiet because they have observed what happens to others who speak up. Workers make a rational calculation:

***Is this worth my job, my reputation, or my career progression?***

Over time, this dynamic creates a powerful cultural signal. The industry unintentionally selects for people who stay silent.

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD

Role	Sector	Experience	Key Insight
HSE Advisor	Commercial Construction	21 years	"Early-career workers learn very quickly what the real rules are. They watch what happens to people who speak up. And then they decide: is this worth my job, my reference, my reputation?"
Construction Academic	University	20 years	"They come in idealistic. Within two or three years, the ones who stayed quiet are still there, and the ones who pushed back have left. The industry is selecting for silence."
HR Director	Major Contracting	23 years	"The perpetrator stayed. The victim left with a payment and a promise not to discuss it. Nobody was any wiser. Nobody was safer. The same behaviour happened again six months later."
Senior Leader	Infrastructure	27 years	"I was told my concern was going to make me very unpopular. That there were relationships here that mattered more than my concerns. I escalated further. I was told I was not a good cultural fit."

When these patterns repeat across organisations, workers internalise an important message:

***Protect the project. Protect relationships. Stay quiet.***

# SECTION 6.2

## NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS AND THE SUPPRESSION OF PATTERN

Several leaders raised the role of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and settlement deeds following workplace complaints.

These agreements often prevent workers from discussing the circumstances surrounding harassment, discrimination or safety concerns.

While intended to resolve disputes, they can create unintended consequences.

When complaints are hidden through NDAs:

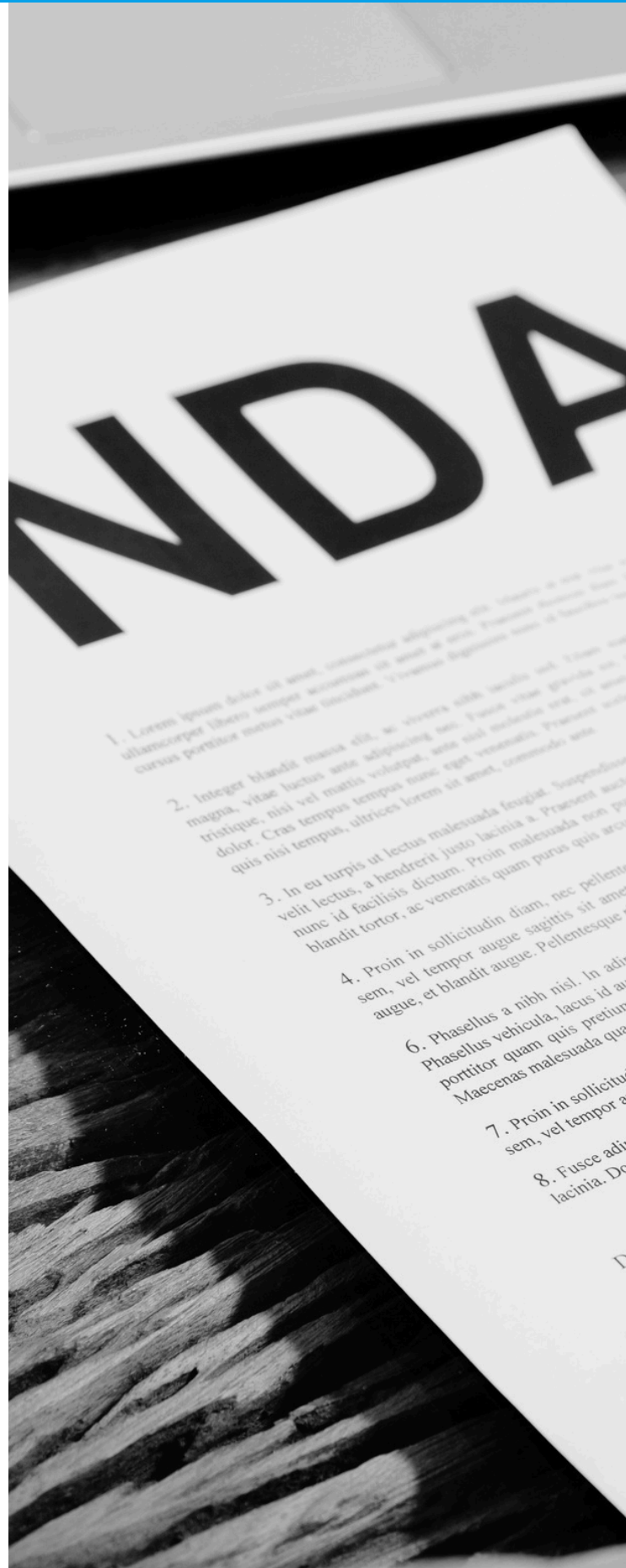
- patterns of behaviour remain undocumented
- organisations lose opportunities to learn
- future workers are unaware of past issues

***In effect, the system protects the behaviour rather than exposing it.***

## LEGAL CONTEXT

The new positive duty<sup>5</sup> under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984<sup>21</sup> and strengthened psychosocial hazard obligations under WHS law<sup>19</sup>, are sending a clear signal: silencing survivors is not a risk management strategy. It is a liability.

Employers who continue to routinely use NDAs following harassment or safety complaints should seek legal advice on whether that practice is consistent with their current obligations.



# SECTION 6.3

## WHAT STOPS GOOD LEADERS FROM ACTING

Even when leaders recognise problems, acting can feel risky.

Many described organisational pressures that discourage confronting difficult issues.

One of our interviewees, a consultant who has worked across defence and infrastructure sectors, described the dynamic clearly.

**"What stops leaders from making the right long-term decision? Fear. Fear of being wrong. Fear of not having a justification for a decision that goes against the grain. Until we create organisations where it is safer to tell the truth than to protect the status quo, we will keep losing our best people to industries that reward integrity instead of punishing it."**

**Capability Specialist | Defence Infrastructure | 20 years**

Until organisations create environments where telling the truth is safer than protecting the status quo, the cycle continues.

***Talented people who value integrity eventually leave where honesty is rewarded.***



# SECTION 6.4

## BUILDING CULTURES WHERE TRUTH HAS A PATHWAY

Leaders who successfully built genuine speak-up cultures described one critical requirement:

### **Visible consequences for retaliation.**

Policies alone are not enough. Workers watch what happens when someone raises a concern. If retaliation occurs and nothing changes, the message is clear.

### **Silence remains the safest option.**

Over time, these practices signal that raising concerns is valued rather than punished.

Organisations that strengthened speak-up cultures implemented several practical practices.

These included:



Senior leaders personally following up on reported concerns



Celebrating near-miss reporting as a safety success



Transparent reporting of investigation outcomes



Treating exit interviews as intelligence gathering

**"I told the team: from today, the most dangerous thing you can do on this project is stay quiet when something is wrong. I meant it. And then I proved I meant it, three times in the first month, by acting on what people told me. After that, people started talking."**

**Project Director | Construction | 28 years**

## **EPIC Note: Speak-Up Culture and Integrity**

EPIC works with construction organisations to strengthen genuine speak-up cultures through workplace culture assessments, escalation pathway design, leadership accountability frameworks and reporting and feedback systems that track whether reporting is increasing. The goal is to ensure reporting becomes a measure of organisational trust rather than a sign of organisational failure.

More information: [www.epicservices.group](http://www.epicservices.group)

# CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY

✓	88% of interviewees described workplaces where speaking up carries real career risk.
✓	Workers often remain silent because they have seen what happens to others who raise concerns.
✓	Non-disclosure agreements can unintentionally suppress patterns of behaviour that organisations need to identify.
✓	Strengthened legal obligations under WHS law <sup>19</sup> and the Sex Discrimination Act <sup>21</sup> place greater responsibility on employers to prevent harm.
✓	Genuine speak-up cultures require visible consequences for retaliation, not just policies.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The culture of silence explored in this chapter did not appear overnight.

Many of the behaviours described are part of the industry's generational inheritance.

But the generation now entering construction is challenging those assumptions.

***Chapter 7 examines what new entrants, particularly Gen Z, expect from workplaces, and why those expectations may represent one of the industry's greatest opportunities for change.***



# CHAPTER 7

## THE GENERATIONAL SHIFT

WHAT NEW ENTRANTS ARE DEMANDING AND WHY CONSTRUCTION MUST LISTEN

### OPENING INSIGHT

Every generation entering construction brings new expectations. But the current cohort, Generation Z and the emerging Generation Alpha workforce, represents something fundamentally different.

*They are not simply asking for better conditions.*

They are questioning the long-standing cultural bargain of the industry: That construction is allowed to be hard, unfair, and damaging, in exchange for a pay packet.

Across interviews conducted for this report, this shift was widely recognised.

But the most common word used to describe the new generation was not entitled.

**It was informed.**

This shift is already reshaping the workforce.

And leaders who ignore it risk losing the next generation of talent.

*"They are simply more aware of what they do not have to tolerate."*

**78%**

Raised the generational shift as a major industry issue

# SECTION 7.1

## THE SKILLS CRISIS IS A CULTURE CRISIS

Australia's construction industry is facing a well-documented workforce shortage.

**36%**

Shortage

According to Jobs and Skills Australia, 36% of occupations assessed in 2023 were in national shortage, with construction trades among the most affected.

**300K**

Shortage

Infrastructure Australia's 2025 Market Capacity Report projects a workforce shortfall of 300,000 construction workers by 2027 <sup>6</sup>.

However, many leaders interviewed in this report offered a different diagnosis. The problem is not simply recruitment.

**It is retention.**

**"They are smart, they are hardworking, they want a trade. And then they hit a supervisor who yells at them in front of the crew, or a workplace where everyone is exhausted and no one talks about it, and they think: I did not sign up for this. "**

VET Trainer | Construction Trades | 29 years

**"The young blokes are not going to take what we took. If the roster is wrong, if the living conditions are not right, if they are not being treated with respect: they will go. They have choices. That is the thing the industry has not fully understood yet."**

Superintendent | Construction | 29 years

Industry data reinforces this shift. Over the three years since March 2022:

Construction apprenticeship <sup>6</sup> commencements fell

**41%**

Total apprenticeship <sup>6</sup> cancellations and withdrawals fell

**18%**

**More apprentices <sup>6</sup> are leaving than entering.**

# SECTION 7.2

## THE SKILLS CRISIS IS A CULTURE CRISIS

Leaders working closest to young entrants described a generation with clear expectations. These expectations are not unreasonable.

Young workers consistently seek:



Respectful supervision



Meaningful learning opportunities



Clear career pathways



Wellbeing is taken seriously

They also want to understand why decisions are made, not simply receive instructions.

**"It really is not about where we end up. It is about what we learn in our experiences along the way. Every role I held, executive director, facility director, project manager, labourer, teacher, all of it collaborated into exactly who I am today. The young people coming in need to be taught that, and they need leaders who model it."**

**Construction Educator | Construction | 29 years**

Leaders working with women entering trades noted an additional challenge.

Recruitment of women into construction trades is increasing.

But completion rates remain low.

**Many women leave the industry because the cultural conditions that existed decades ago have not been fully addressed.**

# SECTION 7.3

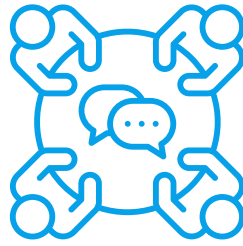
## THE OPPORTUNITY IN GENERATIONAL CHANGE

It is easy to frame the generational shift as a challenge. However, many leaders interviewed described it as one of the industry's greatest opportunities.

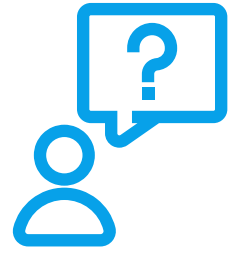
Younger workers often bring the values the industry says it wants:



Openness



Collaboration



Willingness to question outdated practices

**"The change is coming from them. These young people are not tied down by the old ways. They are looking for how they can do things better, how they can be more open, how they can bring a new culture in. And by default, they will change the existing culture, because the new culture will overtake. We have got to find the champions willing to push that, and they are out there. They are everywhere."**

**Mechanical Engineer | HVAC and Facilities | 28 years**

**"Having our people grow is part of the business plan. If we do not have our people growing, the business cannot grow. The investment in coaching and development is not separate from business strategy. It is the business strategy."**

**General Manager | Civil Construction | 23 years**

Leaders who recognise this shift early gain a significant advantage.

***They attract and retain the very workforce the industry says it needs.***

# SECTION 7.4

## WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Leaders who successfully retain younger workers described several consistent practices.

They invest heavily in the **quality of supervision**, recognising that a worker's direct supervisor has the greatest influence on their experience.

They also design workplaces that acknowledge human limits. This includes:



Realistic rosters  
with recovery  
time



Clear career  
progression  
pathways



Leadership  
behaviours that  
model openness  
and respect

When organisations implement these changes, they often discover something unexpected.

***Young workers respond with loyalty, creativity and commitment.***

**"Looking back now as the founder of a tech company, I realise: all those things I had to fight for? They should have just been given. The industry would have kept me a lot sooner if it had just trusted what I brought to the table."**

**HSE Technology Owner | Construction | 20 years**

## EPIC Note: Supporting the Next Generation

EEPIC's Workforce Readiness and leadership development coaching are designed specifically to support both emerging workers and the supervisors managing them. If your organisation is losing young talent, the answer is rarely better recruitment. It is usually better culture.

More information: [www.epicservices.group](http://www.epicservices.group)

# CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY

✓	78% of leaders interviewed identified generational change as a major workforce challenge.
✓	Construction apprenticeship <sup>6</sup> commencements fell by 41% between 2022 and 2026.
✓	The industry is not only struggling to attract young workers, it is struggling to retain them.
✓	Younger workers are demanding respectful workplaces, strong leadership and meaningful career development.
✓	The projected 300,000-worker shortage by 2027 cannot be solved through recruitment <sup>12</sup> alone if culture continues to drive workers out.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The generational shift described in this chapter ultimately returns to the same question raised throughout this report.

### Leadership.

Across the interviews conducted, several organisations were already demonstrating a different approach.

***Chapter 8 explores the leaders who are actively reshaping construction culture and the results they are seeing.***



# CHAPTER 8

## THE LEADERS GETTING IT RIGHT

BRIGHT SPOTS, PROOF POINTS AND THE ANATOMY OF CHANGE

### OPENING INSIGHT

This report has documented difficult truths about the construction industry.



Leadership  
capability  
gaps



Cultural harm



Workforce  
shortages



A mental  
health  
emergency

These issues were raised not to criticise the industry, but to diagnose it honestly.

***Because meaningful change begins with clear diagnosis.***

A story of leaders who refused to accept harmful norms. Leaders who created environments where people feel supported, valued and able to do their best work. This chapter focuses on those leaders.

**Not the policies they wrote or the values on their wall.**

***But the everyday leadership behaviours that create cultures where people genuinely thrive.***

**50**

Global leaders  
interviewed

# SECTION 8.1

## QUALITY #1: SAFETY AS HUMAN PERFORMANCE

One senior safety leader interviewed has worked across oil and gas, aviation, mining and construction for more than 25 years.

He described a defining moment early in his career that changed how he viewed safety leadership.

A worker had fallen from scaffolding in a shipyard in Singapore. An ambulance arrived.

***Within minutes, work resumed as if nothing had happened.***

The incident was treated as an operational interruption rather than a human tragedy.

**"That family had just lost their primary breadwinner. And a whistle blew and everyone got back to work. That did not sit well with me. I thought: I am not okay with that, and maybe I can make a bigger difference in the world of health and safety."**

**HOP Safety Expert | Construction | 25 years**

Since that moment, the leader has focused on applying Human and Organisational Performance (HOP) principles within construction and other high-risk industries.

HOP shifts the focus from blaming individuals for mistakes to understanding the conditions that make mistakes possible.

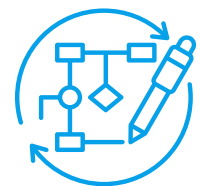
When organisations adopt safety as human performance:



Workers report issues earlier



Near misses are discussed openly



Systems are redesigned to reduce risk

***The result is learning before harm occurs.***

# SECTION 8.2

## QUALITY #2: PEOPLE GROWTH AS BUSINESS STRATEGY

One senior construction executive interviewed described how his leadership philosophy was shaped by the people who invested in his development early in his career.

Rather than focusing only on technical capability, those leaders prioritised mentorship, learning and long-term growth.

That experience shaped how he now approaches leadership and workforce development.

**"I came here to learn. I did not even ask how much I was getting paid. It was the opportunity: who was there to support me, what else was I going to be doing. That is how I chose where to work. And that is how the best people choose where to work. If we do not give them that, they will go somewhere that does."**

**General Manager | Civil Construction | 25 years**

**The practical outcome: almost no failed hires in 15 years.**

Leaders who adopt this mindset view people development as a core business strategy rather than a support function.

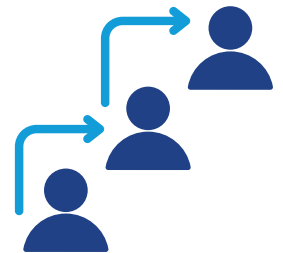
Organisations that invest consistently in people growth as a business strategy often experience:



Stronger  
employee  
retention



Stronger informal  
recruitment  
networks



Deeper  
leadership  
pipelines

***In industries where reputation and word-of-mouth strongly influence recruitment, workplace culture becomes a powerful competitive advantage.***

# SECTION 8.3

## QUALITY #3: LEADERS WHO BECAME THE CHANGE

Several leaders interviewed for this report described experiences that pushed them to create change themselves.

***Rather than waiting for the industry to evolve, they built new pathways for others.***

These leaders include tradespeople, educators and business owners who encountered significant barriers early in their careers, including exclusion, harassment, and limited opportunities.

Instead of leaving the industry entirely, they chose to respond by building initiatives designed to make construction more accessible for the next generation.

**"I am literally the person I needed when I was younger. That is why I do this. Because the gap was real, and I had to fill it myself, and I will be damned if the people coming after me have to do the same."**

**Tradeswomen and Industry Advocate | Residential and Trades | 31 years**

One trades leader spent more than three decades working on the tools before beginning to run workshops encouraging other women to enter the trades.

Another leader described leaving the industry temporarily after experiencing severe bullying during an apprenticeship, later returning to establish a national initiative supporting women entering construction trades.

A third interviewee recalled starting a small trade business with little more than a second-hand vehicle and a set of tools, eventually building a nationally recognised specialist contracting company.

Despite very different journeys, these leaders share a common mindset.

***Leaders refused to accept that the barriers they faced should define the experience of those who followed them.***

Their work demonstrates that cultural change in construction is often driven not by formal programs, but by individuals who choose to build what the industry has not yet provided.

# SECTION 8.4

## QUALITY #4: LEADERSHIP THAT HAS PEOPLE'S BACKS

Several leaders described formative experiences with supervisors who genuinely supported their teams.

One construction leader with more than three decades of industry experience recalled an early supervisor who had a lasting influence on how he now leads others.

***The supervisor was known for setting high standards and expecting strong performance from the team.***

But he was also deeply aware of the people behind the work.

If someone was struggling with pressures outside the job, he addressed it directly, sometimes adjusting schedules or giving workers time to resolve issues before returning to site.

**"My first Irish supervisor pulled me out of a trench one day and said: lads do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. He was a hard task master. But if he knew you were having trouble at home, he would give you a long weekend and say, get yourself sorted out, I will see you back here Tuesday. He had our backs. And because he had our backs, we moved mountains for him."**

**Senior Construction Leader | Infrastructure | 33 years experience**

The result was a workforce that was highly committed to the project and to each other.

Workers felt respected, trusted and supported. And because they knew their leader had their backs, they were willing to go the extra mile when the project demanded it.

Experiences like this continue to shape how many leaders approach supervision in construction today.

They demonstrate that strong leadership is not only about technical competence, but about who has people's backs.

***It is also about creating trust, loyalty and a shared commitment to the work.***

# SECTION 8.5

## QUALITY #5: MENTORSHIP AS INDUSTRY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mentorship emerged repeatedly across interviews as one of the most powerful forces shaping leadership capability in construction. Several described how informal mentoring relationships played a critical role in helping emerging leaders navigate the transition from technical expertise to people leadership.

In many cases, these relationships began simply: a more experienced professional agreeing to guide someone earlier in their career. Over time, these informal connections developed into structured mentoring networks that helped younger professionals build confidence, develop leadership skills, and better understand the broader dynamics of the industry.

**"Self-awareness is probably the biggest thing I look for in good leaders. If they are not self-aware, they are consistently doing things wrong and they are hard to teach. That transition from workmate to supervisor is one of the hardest things we ask people to do. And we barely support them through it."**

**Project Director | Infrastructure | 22 years experience**

***Technical capability alone does not automatically translate into leadership capability.***

The challenge is particularly visible when high-performing tradespeople are promoted into supervisory roles. Without guidance and support, new supervisors may struggle with:



Managing former peers



Navigating difficult conversations



Balancing productivity with people leadership

Leaders interviewed for this report consistently emphasised that mentorship can bridge this gap. When experienced professionals actively mentor emerging leaders, organisations benefit from stronger leadership capability, improved communication on site and better retention of talented workers

Over time, mentorship becomes more than a personal gesture. It becomes part of the leadership infrastructure of a healthy organisation.

# SECTION 8.6

## QUALITY #6: SPONSORSHIP AS LEADERSHIP

Across interviews, several leaders described moments in their careers when someone senior recognised their potential and actively created an opportunity for them. These moments were rarely formal programs or structured talent initiatives. They were individual decisions made by leaders who chose to support someone's development.

**In many cases, that single opportunity changed the trajectory of a career.**

**"I have always had people who saw potential in me and gave me the opportunity. That is the thing that is so often missing: not the potential in the person, but the willingness of the person in the room to name it and do something about it. One project manager gave me a chance about five years ago that changed the direction of my career."**

**Senior Project Manager | Commercial Construction | 27 years**

Leaders interviewed for this report emphasised the importance of genuine human connection in leadership.

Strong leaders build relationships that allow them to understand the strengths, motivations and aspirations of the people they work with.

**"A good leader forms genuine connections with the people they are leading. To bring the best out of those people in order to get to the right outcome. Creating that environment in which everyone thrives, in which people can bring their whole self to work. And that means forming an authentic connection, not one that is only there nine to five."**

**Project Manager | Commercial Construction | 24 years**

Sponsorship goes beyond mentorship. Sponsors take active steps to support emerging talent by recognising potential, advocating for individuals in decision-making rooms and creating opportunities to demonstrate capability.

***When leaders intentionally create opportunities for others, they ensure that talent determines who progresses.***

# SECTION 8.7

## QUALITY #7: THE ANATOMY OF A CULTURE THAT WORKS

Across the leaders interviewed, organisations with strong workplace cultures consistently demonstrated six leadership behaviours.

*These cultures were not created through policies or slogans. They were created through daily leadership choices.*



### Visible Leadership

Leaders are present on site, walking the job, knowing their people, and engaging directly with the work.



### Mental Health Built Into Planning

Work schedules and project delivery expectations recognise human limits, including recovery time and access to support.



### Psychological Safety

Workers can raise concerns without fear. Incidents are treated as learning opportunities rather than blame events.



### Career Development Pathways

Workers see clear opportunities for growth and organisations invest in developing leadership capability.



### Diversity as a Strategic Asset

Different perspectives are recognised as strengthening decision-making and problem solving.



### Consistent Accountability

Standards apply equally to everyone, from apprentice to project director.

**"Culture is not what you post on a wall. It is not the values on a website. Culture is what happens when a senior person walks past bad behaviour and does nothing. And it is what happens when a leader stops, turns around, and says: not here. Not on my watch."**

**Construction Leader | Major Projects | 38 years**

# CHAPTER 8 SUMMARY

✓	Every bright spot in this study traces back to a leader who made a deliberate relational choice, not a program.
✓	The most effective leaders treat people development as core business strategy, not a cost centre.
✓	Mentorship, leadership visibility, and consistent accountability are the defining practices of organisations that retain and develop strong teams.
✓	The strongest cultures in construction are not waiting for the industry to change, they are already demonstrating what better looks like.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The leaders highlighted in this chapter show that change is possible.

The final chapter turns that possibility into action.

***Chapter 9 introduces the EPIC Leadership Playbook for 2026, a practical framework built around five leadership dimensions and a 90-day action structure that leaders can begin implementing immediately.***



# CHAPTER 9

## THE EPIC LEADERSHIP PLAYBOOK FOR 2026

### FROM DIAGNOSIS TO ACTION

The previous eight chapters presented a clear diagnosis of the cultural challenges facing the construction industry. This final chapter focuses on action.

Drawing on insights from 50 industry leaders, national research, and EPIC's three decades of experience supporting cultural change in construction, we present a practical leadership playbook built around five core leadership dimensions.

Each dimension addresses a key issue raised throughout this report and includes actions that construction leaders can begin implementing immediately. This is not a full transformation blueprint.

***Real cultural change takes sustained effort over time.***

Change does not begin with a program.

**It begins with leaders making different choices in the moments that shape culture every day.**

The five dimensions below are interconnected and addresses each of the 7 challenges identified in this report. Strengthening one reinforces the others.

**EPIC** can support with leadership capability building, culture transformation, gender equity strategies, unconscious bias training for psychosocial hazards, workforce readiness programs for new entrants and peer support networks.



# DIMENSION 1

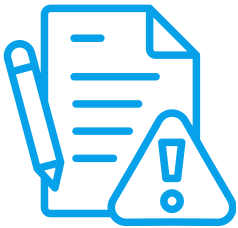
## PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY LEADERSHIP

What great looks like: Leaders at every level can name the specific psychosocial hazards present in their work environment.

They treat psychological health with the same rigour as physical safety, designing workloads, rosters, and supervision with human capacity in mind. Speaking up is consistently rewarded.

*Silence is treated as a warning signal, not a sign of compliance.*

## ACTIONS TO START IN THE NEXT 90 DAYS



Conduct a psychosocial risk assessment of your current team or project using Safe Work Australia's guidance as a framework. **Identify the top three hazards and develop controls for each.**



**Audit your last five incident investigations.**

1. How many addressed systemic or cultural root causes?
2. How many focused on individual behaviour?
3. What does that ratio tell you?



**Train your frontline supervisors in the basics of psychosocial hazard recognition and early intervention.** Not a full-day workshop, but a practical 90-minute conversation about what they are seeing and what they can do.



**Review your incident reporting data.** If near-miss reporting is low relative to incident rates, investigate the cultural barriers. Silence is a system failure, not a worker one.

# DIMENSION 2

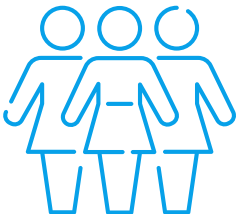
## GENDER EQUITY AND INCLUSION LEADERSHIP

What great looks like: Women, migrants, younger workers, and any group historically excluded are not just recruited. They are retained, developed, and promoted.

Microaggressions are addressed as the psychosocial hazards they are. Flexible work is designed for everyone, not managed as an exception.

*The culture does not require anyone to mask their identity or survive their way into belonging.*

## ACTIONS TO START IN THE NEXT 90 DAYS



**Ask the women in your organisation to honestly describe their experience.** Not via anonymous survey, but in a genuine facilitated conversation where you are present to listen, not to respond defensively.



**Review your last three promotions and last three voluntary exits.**

1. What patterns do you see?
2. Who is being promoted and who is leaving?
3. What does that tell you about whose contributions are valued?



**Implement a minimum standard:** any allegation of sexual or gender-based harassment is treated as a safety incident, investigated, actioned, and followed up with the same accountability that would apply to a physical injury.



**Review your facilities, PPE, and site design** for whether they genuinely accommodate all workers, or whether they were designed for an imaginary average male worker.

# DIMENSION 3

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WORKFORCE WELLBEING LEADERSHIP

What great looks like: Mental health is treated as a safety issue, with identified hazards, designed controls, and regular monitoring.

Leaders model help-seeking. Recovery time is protected. Workers who are struggling get support before reaching crisis point.

***Burnout is recognised as a system failure, not an individual weakness.***

### ACTIONS TO START IN THE NEXT 90 DAYS



**Review your current roster and workload design** with one question: does this give people a genuine chance to recover? If the answer is no, identify one change you can make immediately.



Engage with EPIC as a starting point for **building genuine peer-support capability in your workforce.**



**Establish a regular, brief mental health check-in as part of your toolbox talk cycle.** Not a clinical assessment, but a normalised conversation about how people are travelling.



**Ask your EAP provider for data on uptake rates in your organisation.** Low uptake is not a sign that people are fine. It is a sign that the culture has not yet made it safe to reach out.

# DIMENSION 4

## INTEGRITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SPEAK-UP CULTURE

What great looks like: Truth has a pathway: a clear, visible, consistently used mechanism for raising concerns that does not result in retaliation. Accountability is consistent.

Leaders who have the courage to speak up, are protected and recognised. People who retaliate are held accountable, regardless of their position or technical contribution.

***Non-disclosure agreements are not used to silence workers who have experienced harm.***

### ACTIONS TO START IN THE NEXT 90 DAYS



#### **Audit your last three serious complaints or grievances.**

1. What was the outcome for the person who raised the concern?
2. What was the outcome for the person complained about?
3. What did those outcomes signal to everyone else?



**Review whether your organisation uses NDAs** in relation to harassment or bullying. If so, consider whether this is consistent with your stated values and your current legal obligations under the positive duty.



**Identify one person in your organisation who did the right thing at personal cost** in the past 12 months. Make sure they know you saw it and valued it.



**Establish speaking-up recognition:** brief, public acknowledgement of near-miss reporting, hazard identification, and concern-raising, treated with the same status as project delivery milestones.

# DIMENSION 5

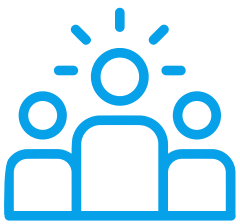
## FUTURE-FOCUSED AND ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

What great looks like: Leaders are investing in the capability of their teams to meet an industry changing faster than it ever has: through net-zero transition, digital transformation, and the expectations of a new generation of workers.

They are building organisations that will still exist and matter in 20 years.

*They are developing successors, not just delivering projects.*

## ACTIONS TO START IN THE NEXT 90 DAYS

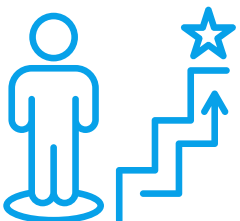


**Identify your three highest-potential emerging leaders.**

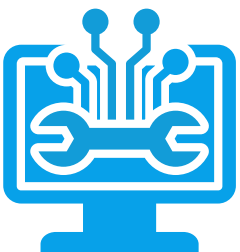
1. Do they have a development plan beyond technical training?
2. Do they have a mentor invested in them as a person, not just as a resource?



**Have a genuine conversation with Gen Z workers** in your team about what they need to stay. Not what you think they need: what they actually tell you. Then act on one thing within 30 days.



**Review your succession pipeline.** If your organisation lost its top five leaders tomorrow, would you have capable ready successors? If not, this is a business continuity and safety risk, not an HR issue.



**Engage with digital tools and new delivery models** coming into construction. Leaders who treat change as a threat will lose their best people to organisations that treat it as an opportunity.

# SECTION 9.1

## A CALL-IN, NOT A CALL-OUT

This report is not intended as criticism of the construction industry. The industry that builds our hospitals, schools, highways, and homes is not fundamentally broken. It is, in many ways, a remarkable sector filled with remarkable people. But it has carried cultural weight for too long: weight that is costing lives, talent, and the kind of industry we want to hand to the next generation.

*That willingness to change provides cause for optimism.*

**"A good leader forms genuine connections with the people they are leading. To bring the best out of those people in order to get to the right outcome. Creating that environment in which everyone thrives, in which people can bring their whole self to work."**

**Structural Engineer | Infrastructure | 33 years**

The leaders interviewed demonstrate what construction can look like at its best. An industry that is:



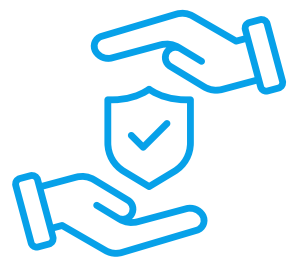
Inclusive



Courageous



Human



Safe

Every leader has a choice, every day, about what kind of culture they create.

The evidence in this report shows that consistent leadership choices are the most powerful driver of cultural change.

**Build More Than Structures**

**Build Trust**

# Acknowledgements

This report would not exist without the courage and generosity of 50 construction leaders who gave their time, their honesty, and their stories. They spoke not because it was easy, but because they believed that being honest about the hard parts of this industry is the only way to make it better. We are profoundly grateful to each of them.

The leaders in this report came from across Australia and beyond: from remote FIFO sites to city boardrooms, from trade workshops to executive leadership teams. Every one of them brought a minimum of 20 years of industry experience. Several have spent four decades in the field. What they share, regardless of background, sector, or title, is a commitment to construction that goes beyond the structure and into the people.

We thank the organisations and individuals who connected us with participants, supported the project's development, and provided data and research references. We thank the team at EPIC for their sustained effort in bringing this project to life.

And we thank everyone who has ever spoken up on a site, in a meeting room, or in a conversation with a colleague, knowing it might cost them something, because they believed that what they were seeing was not acceptable. You are the reason this industry is changing.

*With Gratitude*



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[hello@epicservices.group](mailto:hello@epicservices.group)

# APPENDIX A

## INTERVIEW REGISTER

The following register documents the professional context of the 50 interviews conducted for this report. In accordance with the anonymisation policy agreed with all participants, individual names are not associated with specific quotes or findings within the body of the report.

#	ROLE	SECTOR	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	GENDER	LOCATION
1	Mechanical Engineer	Commercial Construction	28	M	Australia
2	Project Director	Construction & development	28	F	Australia
3	Governance & Culture Advisor	Infrastructure	25	M	Australia
4	Head of Project Management	Energy	28	M	Australia
5	Project Manager	Commercial Construction	24	F	Australia
6	Estimator & Procurement	Residential	20	F	Australia
7	HR & Recruitment	Construction & Engineering	20	F	Australia
8	HSE Executive	Major Projects	38	M	UK
9	Business Innovation & Transformation	Property & Construction	31	M	UK
10	HSE Director	Major Projects	28	M	Australia
11	Construction Educator	Construction	29	F	USA
12	HSE Director	Major Projects	33	M	Canada
13	Infrastructure and Capability Specialist	Defence Infrastructure	20	M	Australia
14	Productivity and safety Specialist	Infrastructure	33	M	Australia
15	HSE Specialist	Major Projects	20	M	Australia
16	Group CEO	Property & Construction	20	F	Australia

# APPENDIX A CONT'D

## INTERVIEW REGISTER

#	ROLE	SECTOR	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	GENDER	LOCATION
17	Chartered Quantity Surveyor	Construction	33	F	UK
18	Company Director	Civil Construction	35	F	Australia
19	Project Director	Infrastructure	22	M	Australia
20	Assessor, Trainer, HSE Specialist	Major Projects	45	M	Australia
21	CEO & Quantity Surveyor	Property Development	22	M	Australia
22	Workplace Safety & Wellbeing Specialist	Infrastructure	22	M	Middle East
23	Project Manager	Commercial Construction	27	F	USA
24	General Manager	Civil Construction	23	M	Australia
25	Cost and commercial advisor	Major Projects	25	F	Europe
26	Electrician & VET Trainer	Construction	30	F	Australia
27	Carpenter & Project Manager	Commercial Construction	29	F	Australia
28	HSE Technology CEO	Major Projects	20	F	Indonesia
29	Social Procurement Specialist	Major Projects	22	F	Australia
30	Strategy, Governance and Assurance	Infrastructure	20	F	UK
31	Global Events Co-founder	Construction	29	M	Australia
32	HSE Training CEO	Construction	30	M	Australia
33	Structural Engineer	Infrastructure	33	M	Australia
34	State Managing Director	Property & Construction	25	F	Australia

# APPENDIX A CONT'D

## INTERVIEW REGISTER

#	ROLE	SECTOR	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	GENDER	LOCATION
35	HSE Director	Civil Construction	20	M	Australia
36	University Construction Educator	Construction	40	M	USA
37	Project Manager	Construction	29	M	Australia
38	Company Director	Construction	21	F	Australia
39	Construction Manager	Infrastructure	21	M	Australia
40	Operations Manager	Residential	20	F	Australia
41	Tradesperson & Educator	Residential	31	F	Australia
42	HR & Recruitment	Major Projects	25	F	Australia
43	Architect & Design	Major Developments	21	F	Australia
44	Company Director	Commercial Development	34	F	Australia
45	Structural Engineer	Building and Construction	29	M	Australia
46	Managing Director	Infrastructure	32	M	Australia
47	Senior Cost Planner & Lecturer	Infrastructure	44	M	Australia
48	Senior Safety Advisor	Major Projects	20	F	Australia
49	Chartered Quantity Surveyor	Construction	22	F	UK
50	HR Leader & Strategist	Major Projects	28	M	Australia

*This register reflects professional context. Role titles are paraphrased to reflect function rather than exact title, in line with the anonymisation protocol. All interviews were conducted by Angela Hucker, Founder and CEO of EPIC.*

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