

Industry Innovation Program



McConnell Dowell –WINTR is coming

Overview

The Industry Innovation Program –or IIP– is a grants program that supports industry-led initiatives to encourage participation and retention of women in the construction industry. McConnell Dowell was an IIP Year 1 grant recipient for their ‘WINTR is coming’ initiative.

Background

The ‘WINTR (or Women in Non-Traditional Roles) is Coming’ initiative is focused on increasing the number of women in site-based roles by providing practical hands-on training and industry-recognised qualifications, as well as mentoring opportunities. The initiative comprises a 12-month traineeship with four separate phases.

Initiative

McConnell Dowell’s objective is to challenge the barriers that have kept women from accessing and excelling in construction roles traditionally dominated by men. This initiative is an effort to redefine the dynamics of project sites and introduce a much-needed shift towards genuine diversity and inclusion in an industry resistant to change.

Four phases to success

Engage Phase: trainees engage with the business and understand how McConnell Dowell operates and what the program entails.

Learn Phase: trainees commence a structured learning program focusing on both technical and leadership skills.

Accelerate Phase: trainees will be introduced to various discipline within the business.

Master Phase: trainees will apply their learnings.

During the program, trainees are provided with opportunities to learn from mentors, leaders within the business, key subject matter experts and their fellow trainees in a supported environment.

The program encompasses on-the-job learning through a structured rotation program, which includes:

- completion of a Certificate IV in Project Building Support
- classroom instruction on a variety of industry specific topics including Project Management, Safety Leadership, Estimation and Planning
- Development of leadership skills
- Robust mentoring opportunities.



25%

Female representation target realised



50%

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background



Program aims

Remove Barriers to Entry

By providing practical on-the-job training as well as accredited qualification, the program actively works to eliminate barriers that often deter women from entering the construction industry. This hands-on experience helps women overcome initial hurdles and gain confidence in on-site roles.

Create Desire and Awareness

The program actively promotes the benefits and opportunities that a career in construction can offer to women. Through targeted communication and awareness campaigns, it aims to break stereotypes, showcasing the diverse roles available and the potential for career growth within the industry.

Increase Retention

The program establishes clear and accessible pathways for women to apply, enter, and progress in construction. By streamlining entry processes and outlining achievable career trajectories, it addresses the ambiguity that often hinders women from pursuing and advancing in construction roles.

Recognising the challenges women may face, the program offers active support and case management to ensure not only entry but sustained retention within the industry. This involves mentorship programs, regular check-ins by the project officer, and tailored support systems to address individual needs and challenges.

At the end of this experiential program, we are hoping that women new to the industry are upskilled and able to secure ongoing employment in the industry.

Benefits

Not only has this program allowed McConnell Dowell to reach their goal of 25% women employees in NSW (data as at 31 Jan 2024), but it has also diversified their talent pool by introducing women with unique perspectives from industries beyond construction.

Furthermore, over 50% of our cohort represents Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds. This initiative significantly enhances the overall diversity of the company, fostering a richer and more inclusive work environment.

Success story: Farzana Hossein

Trainee Farzana Hossein, a former hospital assistant, is embracing the flexibility built into the program as it allows her to work from home, and flexible start and finish times mean she is now able to do school pick up and drop off.

While the transition from hospital worker to the construction industry has been a significant shift, Farzana has felt very supported, not only by her supervisor, but also her coworkers onsite.

“I found the course difficult at first, but I am now getting the hang of it. As we move through the modules and the assessments it gets progressively easier. It helps to be completing this program in a cohort as I have a network of other women going through the same experience and we are able to help each other which has lifted my confidence and provided a sense of community.”

“The perception of working in the construction industry is that it is not flexible – particularly for women with family commitments. However, I hope that sharing my experience will inspire others to join the industry.”