

NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY FORUM MEETING

23 February 2024

Communiqué

Members of the National Construction Industry Forum (Forum) met for the second time on Friday, 23 February 2024.

The Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations (Chair) chaired the meeting and acknowledged the work of members since the Forum's first meeting in October 2023.

Since the first meeting, two tripartite subcommittees of the Forum have been established – the Gender Equity and the Financial Viability Subcommittees.

Gender Equity Subcommittee

Co-chair, Ms Naomi Brooks, led an update to the Forum on the activities of the Gender Equity Subcommittee.

Representatives on the Gender Equity Subcommittee met in December 2023, and again in February 2024, to consider the Subcommittee's Terms of Reference and key focus areas. Employer and employee members have identified three priority areas relating to gender equity in the construction industry:

1. Recruitment of women into a broad range of roles.
2. Retention of women, including consideration of the industry's culture.
3. Progression of women in the industry and into diverse roles.

The Subcommittee's Terms of Reference were agreed with minor amendments to be finalised out of session.

Financial Viability Subcommittee

Co-chair Ms Irma Beganovic led an update to the Forum on the activities of the Financial Viability Subcommittee.

Representatives on the Financial Viability Subcommittee met in December 2023, and again in February 2024, to consider the Subcommittee's Terms of Reference and key focus areas. Employer and employee members have identified five priority areas relating to financial viability in the construction industry:

1. Security of payments for everyone in the contractual chain, including consideration of nationally consistent and harmonised legislation to assist in achieving financial viability
2. Profitability and fairness
3. Cash neutrality
4. Securities and insurance
5. Future workforces and skillsets.

Minister King welcomed the Subcommittee's further engagement with the Government on how value for money is recognised in the upcoming Federation Funding Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects.

The Subcommittee's Terms of Reference were agreed with minor amendments to be finalised out of session.

Action:

The Chair acknowledged the work of both Subcommittees and thanked them for their commitment to these important issues in the building and construction industry.

Given the tripartite nature of the Forum, the Chair will ensure that, moving forward, the Subcommittees will have appropriate agency-level representation to assist the Subcommittees in their work. Minister King committed to her department engaging with Forum about the Federation Funding Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects.

The Gender Equity and Financial Viability Subcommittees will meet monthly, engaging with relevant stakeholders across industry and governments and aiming to provide regular advice to the Forum.

Forward Work Plan

The Forward Work Plan (the Plan) outlines focus areas for the Forum and delivery timeframes over the coming years, including the anticipated activities of the Forum's Gender Equity and Financial Viability Subcommittees. Members have until 8 March 2024 to propose edits to the Plan, at which point it will be progressed to Ministers for their consideration.

The Plan will be updated over the life of the Forum, subject to members' agreement.

Presentation: Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System

Ms Anna Faithfull, Deputy Secretary of the Skills and Training Group, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, delivered a presentation on the recently announced [Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System](#) (Strategic Review).

The Strategic Review is investigating the support available to help more people start and complete apprenticeships and traineeships. The Strategic Review will look at:

1. How the Incentive System and complementary services are performing in helping the take up and completion of apprenticeships and traineeships.
2. The effect that cost-of-living pressures is having on apprentices and trainees.
3. How the Apprenticeships System can best support high quality apprenticeships and traineeships, including the roles of government support, workplace conditions and culture, and employers.
4. If the current system is creating a training environment encouraging women, First Nations people, people with disability and people in regional, rural and remote communities into apprenticeships and traineeships.
5. How the Incentive System can be aligned with the priorities in the 2023 Employment White Paper and the Australian Government's broader economic objectives.

Members discussed the challenges with ensuring Australia has workers with the trade and technical skills needed by the building and construction industry, including in relation to:

- the integration of apprenticeship pathways in schools;
- improving the status of trade vocations, and
- the impact of apprentice wages on completion rates.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Forum is scheduled for August 2024.

Attendees

The Chair, the Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

The Hon Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Ms Melissa Adler, Housing Industry Association

Ms Irma Beganovic, National Electrical and Communications Association

Ms Naomi Brooks, Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union

Mr Tony Callinan, Australian Workers' Union

Ms Deborah Coakley, Dexus Funds Management and the Property Council of Australia

Mr Brent Crockford, Australian Owned Contractors

Mr Jon Davies, Australian Constructors Association

Mr Steve Murphy, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union

Ms Stacey Schinnerl, Australian Workers' Union

Mr Zach Smith, Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union

Ms Gabrielle Trainor AO, Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (Substitute for Ms Alison Mirams)

Other participants

Ms Anna Faithfull, Deputy Secretary, Skills and Training Group, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (Invited Participant)

Mr Greg Manning, Deputy Secretary, Workplace Relations Group, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (Observer)

Ms Jessica Hall, Deputy Secretary, Infrastructure Group, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (Observer)

Mr Nick Newhouse, Manager, Department of Industry, Science and Resources (Observer)

Apologies

The Hon Ed Husic MP, Minister for Industry and Science

Ms Alison Mirams, Formerly Roberts Co

Mr Michael Wright, Electrical Trades Union

More information on the Forum is available at: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/australian-building-and-construction-industry/national-construction-industry-forum>.

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