

NAWIC NEWS

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION (NSW)



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Seasons Greetings

Seasons Greetings to you all from the team at NAWIC (NSW). Our issue this month brings you some of the latest coverage we have had from the Financial Review about our Spring lunch and our mentoring program. Our last issue provided you with loads of information about the Spring Lunch presentation by Deborah Dearing and this issue we cover off what the mentoring program is all about. Stay tuned for future issues which will delve into the detail of the program as it progresses.

We also have a look at our future workplaces prompting us to think about our skills in negotiating and planning our careers. Career development is the subject of our issue in the new year so stay tuned for that.

Also welcome to all our new members who have joined this month. We look forward to meeting you at the next NAWIC event.

President's Message



Hello and welcome to our December issue. It is well known that without identified goals, you do not achieve your maximum potential. As the saying goes, if you don't know where you want to go, any road will take you there.

NAWIC is no different to individuals or business. With this sentiment in mind, over the last few months the Board has been busy putting together a strategic plan for the year. We now have an overall identifiable goal for each committee and a set of goals for the 2006/2007 year.

The process started with a planning session for the Awards, a review of past events and to brainstorm new ideas. This was followed by a Board planning session ably facilitated by our Sponsorship and Marketing Chair, Letitia Hope, where we identified one major goal for each committee and completed the overall Board Strategic Plan. The last step in the process was the development by each committee, of an action plan to achieve their individual goals.

It has been a very helpful exercise and has focussed everyone on the direction the Board wishes to take for the year.

We just had a workshop for the Board on Networking Skills, facilitated by Isabella Allan, a Board member and Chair of the Newsletter Committee. It was a truly beneficial and informative session. Thanks Isabella.

If there is enough interest from members in a networking workshop, we may be able to squeeze another workshop into the events program for next year. Please let us know if you'd be interested!

An event we held recently was the sold out tour for the Ian Thorpe pool site in Pyrmont on 6 November. It was a fantastic building to see take shape. We also held our annual End of Year drinks at the Tilbury on 30 November.

NAWIC also has some exciting projects coming up. The National Association of Women in Construction NSW Chapter (NAWIC), Master Builders Association NSW (MBA) and Royal Australian Institute of Architects NSW Chapter (RAIA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to work together to provide a mentoring program for young women entrepreneurs in a project titled "Constructive Mentoring". Aimed at Mentoring Managers of Small Business in Building, Construction & Design Industries, this project is an Australian Government funded service under the Building Entrepreneurship in Small Business Program.

Federal Minister Fran Bailey launched the mentoring program in Sydney on 14 November at the Opera House.

If you wish to be a mentor and/or a mentoree in the mentoring program, please nominate yourself when the NAWIC National Office emails your official invitation to join.

In late February 2007 the 'Build a Better Future' project will be launched in Perth by Federal MP Julie Bishop. This is another Federal Government funded project via the Australian Government Office for Women, Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA). Please watch the website for additional information on both of these projects.

A special thank you to Sascha Tyson, our tireless Events Committee Chair, who has resigned to relocate to Europe to further her career. Sascha has done a tremendous job overseeing the Spring lunch and all our events through the year.

On behalf of the Board, we wish you a safe and happy festive season and New Year, and look forward to seeing you in 2007.

Warm regards
Michelle

Constructive Mentoring

An Australian Government funded service under the Building Entrepreneurship in Small Business program

Amongst the traditionally male industries in Australia, the construction industry is unique in the challenges it poses to its female participants. NAWIC NSW, in conjunction with the Master Builder's Association of NSW (MBA) and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects NSW (RAIA), has responded to these challenges by creating the Constructive Mentoring Program.

This is an Australian Government funded service under the Building Entrepreneurship in Small Business program and is about to commence in NSW and will be rolled out nationally next year. The target is for 1500 women in construction small business to be receiving mentoring assistance by March 2008.

Why the construction industry?

The construction industry is unique in that:

- many of the participating companies are small and are usually family based;
- the level of competition within the industry is very high, especially as many of the participating companies are of a similar size; and
- the industry is highly regulated, and compliance with everything from OH&S procedures to council requirements and environmental regulations is usually the responsibility of these companies.

Why women?

Men who participate in small construction businesses typically begin these businesses after earning a trade or other qualification such as architecture, and working for an employer for a number of years. Although often not focussed on small business management, this training and experience gives men a grounding in the construction industry. Women, on the other hand, typically enter the industry by participating in the small business of their family, husband or partner. Their role in these businesses typically involves financial management and administration, and determining the future direction of the business.

The women in the industry therefore often have not received formal training and have little, if any, experience in the industry. After beginning their participation in the business, the highly competitive nature of the industry means that they are seldom able to gain formal training later on.

Women professionals who are trained prior to entering the industry find it very difficult to combine the pressures of moving up the ladder at the same time as raising families. This results in a high drop out rate of this well trained and skilled group of people from the larger businesses. Additionally, some of these women start their own businesses in order to better manage their time

constraints. The lack of training in the business aspects of these ventures is very similar to the issues faced by their counterparts in the construction industry.

NAWIC, along with MBA and RAIA, feel that this often means that women are not able to reach their full potential in the construction industry. As they often hold a considerable financial stake in these businesses, this lack of training and experience can affect their financial security as well as that of their partner and family.

The Commonwealth government has echoed this concern and has provided a grant in the hope that addressing this situation will:

- increase the financial security of Australian families;
- encourage the development of the industry as a whole by encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation teamed with better business practices;
- reduce the number of small construction businesses that go into receivership; and
- improve the re-sale value of small construction businesses to allow their owners to have greater security in retirement.

Why mentoring?

Because of the high level of competition in the construction industry, formal training of any kind is generally regarded as too costly in terms of both time and money. Mentoring, on the other hand, is an informal, flexible and low-cost way to provide training and the benefit of someone else's experience.

It is expected that the mentors in the program will be able to provide hands-on, real life experience on topics as wide ranging as the implications of BASIX certification, hiring apprentices and other young staff, and who to contact to find out information they don't know.

As well as passing on knowledge to the women participating in the program, mentors can also be an important sounding board as the participants become more confident about growing their own business.

Why NAWIC, MBA and RAIA?

Combining the three organisations opens up the opportunity to provide assistance to the many and varied backgrounds of women in small businesses in the industry, from architecture and engineering to building and construction. With the combined experience that NAWIC, MBA & RAIA have in running mentoring and training programs specifically for women, information already collated can be utilised to contribute towards the development and ongoing delivery of the Constructive Mentoring Program.

The Constructive Mentoring Program

Work began on setting up the program in 2005, and an application for federal funding was lodged early this year. The grant has now been approved and allocated to the program, and work is about to commence on setting it up!

The program is administered by a steering committee with two members and an alternate member from each organisation. The NAWIC representatives are Elizabeth Williams and Lucy Nolan, from the NAWIC education committee, Shani Smith from the national board is the alternate member.

The project will be set up and run on a day-to-day basis by a program administrator. The steering committee has just held interviews for this position and will announce the successful applicant shortly.

In order to reach regional participants as well as those in metropolitan areas, the program administrator will be involved in setting up a wide range of online and telephone resources for both mentors and mentorees. He or she will also help to match up the mentors and mentorees and assist them all in getting the most out of the program.

At the end of the program's funding period, it is hoped that the program will be self sufficient and able to run with minimal guidance from NAWIC, RAIA and the MBA. Alternatively, a second grant may be applied for, to help expand the program further.

NAWIC is very proud to be part of such a great initiative and, through it, hopes to make a real difference to the working lives of women in the construction industry.

Steering Committee Members

MBA

Brian Seidler
Michael Hall
Maxine Leeson

RAIA

Caroline Pidcock
Nick Collis-George
Kylie Mills

NAWIC

Elizabeth Williams
Shani Smith
Lucy Nolan

The launch of the Constructive Mentoring program was on November 14th at the Opera House and was held in conjunction with MBA and RAIA. Fran Bailey, the Minister for Small Business and Tourism, officially launched the project.

Women meet more than a glass ceiling

Agenda
Tina Perinotto

One of the most insightful analyses of women in the architectural profession was conducted last year by Queensland academic Paula Whitman.

It found what so many women will instinctively know – that they have plenty of similarities with men, but that sometimes those very similarities can become greater challenges.

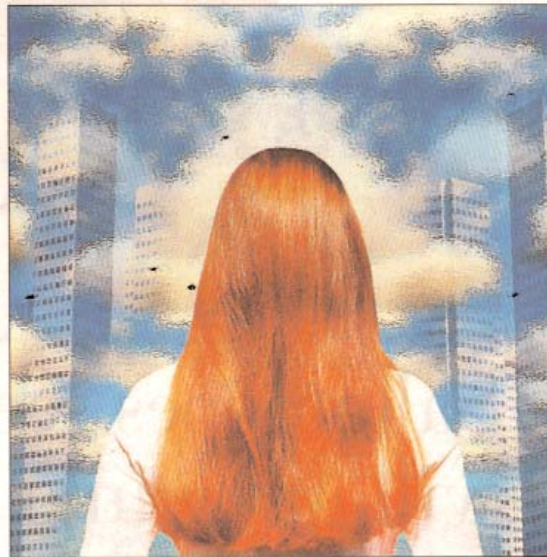
Among the findings were that women – presumably like men – believe “you are only as good as your last project”.

And that getting ahead in your career is based on past performance, technical competency, compatibility with management and staff as well as having an ability to bring in work.

Like men, women in architecture want to leave a changed footprint on the earth. By the time they retire they want to leave behind benchmark projects that “make a difference in cultural and environmental terms.”

But these similarities in values start to become barriers to women’s advancement – especially when women want to include concepts of family or balance in their equation.

Being only as good as your last project becomes a huge impediment when you’ve just taken five or seven years off from the workforce to have children.



Getting ahead . . . in building, the playing field isn't level.

Photo: GREG NEWINGTON

And women’s tendency to reject “scale of a project, practice size, awards and journal coverage as measures of their personal success” is not the conventional path to success. But architecture is only one aspect of property development and

construction. Like the often conflicting roles women need to take on in balancing work and family, the development industry itself is often complex and conflicting – architects pitted against builders, builders against

subbies and developers against planners. (So in some respects this sounds like an ideal industry for women.)

Now, in turn, the study by Whitman has spawned a \$250,000 grant from the federal government’s AusAid to develop a mentoring framework designed to break down some of the barriers for women, not just in architecture, but across building and the wider construction industry.

Signing a memorandum of understanding for the November launch for the scheme are the Master Builders Association NSW, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects NSW Chapter and the National Association of Women in Construction NSW Chapter.

And although the two-year pilot program will start in NSW, the intention is to roll it out nationally.

The model was based on a pilot project run by the MBA NSW two years ago, to connect women who managed the office and home side of their partners’ construction businesses, mostly in isolation, but were really “the backbone of the industry,” according to executive director Brian Seidler.

New president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects NSW Chapter, Deborah Dearing, believes that mentoring and networking are critical for women.

That’s the only way things have improved for women over time, she says.

“Instead of one person putting in a request, their voices were united,” Dearing says.

“I’m not suggesting that there is a greater need for women to network than for men. But men network much better. They network through clubs . . . and in terms of golf and after-work functions and they arrange functions that are male dominated surrounding the work place. They meet each other and talk through the challenges.

“It’s a huge generalisation here but if you look at the norm, particularly with professional women juggling family as well . . . women don’t allow themselves the time.”

But it’s changing. There are more networks, formal and informal, and women are getting better at working out that they need to discuss with each other how to manage the challenges they face.

Shani Smith, national director of NAWIC, confirms this. NAWIC, she says, is only a month or two away from breaking through the 1000 barrier in membership. The biggest drawcard for women she says is the ability to breach the isolation.

“These are major challenges. They can get into companies where they are the only woman in the whole company.”

But if they are, she says, they can call on their NAWIC friends and have a chat. Sometimes that’s all it takes.

Fostering networks for support and learning

Corporate woman
Catherine Fox

Experience is a hard teacher, so the saying goes. She gives the test first and the lessons afterwards.

When leading architect Deborah Dearing spoke to the National Association of Women in Construction meeting in Sydney last week, she talked about some things she’d do differently in her career with the benefit of experience.

One of them was participating in women’s organisations and networks. When she was starting her career, says Dearing – the national manager of strategic urban planning for Stockland and president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects NSW – she found it easy to be dismissive of these networks. They included an earlier group for women in the development and construction industries called Constructive Women.

“For some reason, I had always been treated well,” Dearing tells the audience.

“Scholarships, promotions and opportunities came easily to me,” she says. “It was very easy in this context to regard the need for networking groups as irrelevant.”

“I remember being dismissive of the Constructive Women’s group. I was wrong.”

The lesson learned? The “benefits of networking, mentoring and coaching are invaluable. For every idea shared, you will receive 1000 in return. We all need to support and learn from one another”.

Hindsight, of course, is a grand thing.

But Dearing’s comments are particularly relevant because of the continuing concern that there is a stigma attached to being part of a “women’s group”.

This line of thinking ignores the reality that women are already stigmatised in many businesses, particularly in the higher ranks

where they are as scarce as hen’s teeth.

And finding some like-minded colleagues to discuss work issues and share hard-earned experience with is not a backward career step for many women. It’s actually really smart.

Men who do this well not only get ahead faster, they are usually rewarded for their superb networking skills.

“The benefits of networking, mentoring and coaching are invaluable.”

In another attempt to neutralise the gender stigma, some women in professional and senior roles try to behave like men. Wrong move, says Dearing.

As part of the first wave of women breaking into architecture, it was expected that she and her cohorts would play by the men’s

rules. Many of them accepted this without questioning, at the time.

“I’ve since learnt that adopting male business practices and characteristics, ostensibly to align with the industry, is not only underselling our expertise, but it also lessens our potential contribution.”

Looking back, Dearing regrets the “madness” of taking just four weeks off after the births of her two children.

She feared the impact on her career, but is certain now that the effects of a longer maternity leave period would have been minor, and she would have had the chance to really enjoy this part of her life.

The lessons Dearing imparted at the NAWIC lunch were a perfect example of effective women’s networking. Many young women in the audience were at a stage in their careers where some crucial decisions about jobs, family and career need to be made.

Hearing a highly successful

woman speak of these issues is invaluable.

There’s little data on how many women’s networks, both in-house and external, are operating in Australian business. But anecdotal evidence suggests there are many – including bodies representing most major professions and sectors, and in many of our largest business organisations.

Clearly, many women find these forums useful, and either see no stigma attached or feel the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages.

They are forums designed by and for women with their particular concerns in the workplace.

Women in business don’t need to mimic men, as Dearing points out, and that includes the way they network. And they shouldn’t have to feel defensive or apologetic about it either.

Women’s networking may be different to men’s, but it’s just as legitimate.

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Our Changing Workplace – What we need to know

By Isabella Allan

While our community still actively debates the new work choices legislation, the act will no doubt change the way we gain a job. While individual cases are brought to our attention to demonstrate the success and failure of the legislation and law firms churn out reference manuals to help HR managers decipher the legislation we might want to take a moment to reflect on “what’s in it for women”.

To understand the context lets look at some facts. Our most recent decade has seen a tremendous increase in the number of women participating in the workforce – both in a part time and full time capacity. This active return to the workplace by women is often while they also care for small children, on a scale not seen in previous generations. This return to work phenomenon is not just in NSW where house prices might suggest a need to return to work in order to pay for the mortgage. What has been clearly demonstrated by women over the past twenty years is that they want to work.

According to George Megalogenis, in his book “*The Longest Decade*”, women now outnumber men in the organisational work participation rate in Australia. Megalogenis argues this increased presence of women in the workforce was achieved through the first Industrial Relations change brought about by the Keating government – the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. This started the move toward individual agreements and most importantly the break down of what Megalogenis calls the “blokey Australian

male dominated workplace” enabling the door to be opened for women’s further participation in the workplace.

Yet while women may be increasingly replacing men as the largest group participating in the organised/company workforce, women are still paid 10-15% below that earned by a man who may be undertaking similar work. This is despite continuing involvement by collective organisations such as unions in bargaining on behalf of employees. So under the new work choices regime our biggest unanswered question is how well will individual woman do in reaching a more equal pay for equal work arrangement with an employer if they are negotiating on behalf of themselves.

The key word is of course “negotiated individual agreement”. What remains to be seen for women in this new employment climate is how skilled we are at negotiating what we want. The core elements are of course:

- to know exactly what we want;
- to have the ability to articulate succinctly the business outcomes we have achieved in our jobs (our ability to promote ourselves); and
- the skills to negotiate (both tactically and strategically).

Our ability to know our worth, to value the fact that we can contribute to a project and an organisation is also critical, and stems from the basis of our own sense of self. Specifically working on the negotiating skills of women in both a

coaching and training perspective has lead me to observe that in most instances women need to learn how to promote themselves and understand what they want to achieve in the future (a career strategy). Both elements are critical to women being able to argue what they are worth and to have the confidence to ask for the wage value equivalent to their male colleagues. It is also important to realise that negotiation is a strategy and is not just left to the “one off” agreement stage. Our ability to consistently demonstrate our achievements so that we build up a case for our worth is a core tactic to negotiating what you want. So don’t wait for the performance review – start building your case now.

Our ability to develop our skills, know where our career is heading, succinctly inform people of what we have achieved for the business we work in and our ability to strategically and tactically negotiate equal pay for equal work is important not only for us now but for the future generations of women who want to work.

Isabella Allan is the Managing Director of Sage Allan – a firm that helps individuals develop the skills they need to have to improve their performance at work. Sage Allan is a proud member of NAWIC (NSW).

To find out more information about Sage Allan check out the following website: www.sageallan.com.au

Also check out the next issue of NAWIC News with its focus on career development. ... Ed

Introducing...

Name: **Susette Dixon**

Occupation: **Civil Engineer**

Company: **Seconded to the North South Bypass Tunnel from Baulderstone Hornibrook**

Website: www.rivercitymotorway.net.au

Q1 Brief description of a day in your working life?

Mornings are always a bit frantic, especially if I try to get to the gym or walk my dog before work. Get a quick briefing from my secretary on what lies ahead for the day, check my emails and then the rest of the working day is generally split between meetings, working through emails, reviewing documents, making lots of decisions when people come knocking on my office door with questions and making time to take a step back to check everything is running okay.

Q2 How did you get into this industry?

I come from a family of engineers, so it was what I grew up with and it was familiar to me.

Q3 Describe a particular experience/ thought that makes you proud to be a woman in the construction industry?

I enjoy being part of the engineering fraternity – engineers are generally great down-to-earth people, whose greatest pleasure is solving problems and using their working day in a really positive, constructive way.

Q4 Who inspires you?

I have had some good role models throughout my career. Generally the people who inspire me are very good at what they do, share their knowledge and experience freely, have a fulfilling life in and out of work and above all stay true to themselves.

Q5 What couldn't you do without?

I think most people can adapt to anything, but the thing I'd least like to live without is my partner, David, and our dog. They keep me human.

Q6 Where are you most likely to be found on a Saturday/Sunday morning?

Saturday – at work. Sunday – Having breakfast out somewhere with a bunch of

magazines and the newspaper, or somewhere by the water with our dog.

Q7 Tell us one thing no one at the office would know about you.

I have a shy side.

Q8 What did you want to be when you 'grew up'?

Lots of things, including a pilot, an architect and no doubt a ballerina at some point.

Q9 What achievement are you most proud of and why?

Conquering my fear of public speaking, because it was such a hard thing to confront and it is so rewarding to have worked my way through it.

Q10 Name one thing you really want to do in the next 10 years.

I've achieved quite a bit in my career, mostly at the expense of other areas of my life, so I'd like to focus on achieving something outside work, like becoming really proficient in a physical pursuit, such as sailing, tennis or rock climbing.

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Website

Chair	Ana Beretin
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Membership

Chair	Meighan Heard
Members	Jennifer Bickernell

Future Events

Check out www.nawic.com.au – the NSW Chapter Events page to find out when the following events are scheduled:

- Young Professionals Networking Night
- Designing with Indigenous Australia
- Golf Networking Day
- Balancing Life and Work
- IR Legislation Seminar

Also check our next edition for new events.

Our Thanks To...

Our thanks are extended to HASSELL for hosting the monthly NSW Board of Management meetings.

Articles

Ever wanted to be a writer? Now is your chance. We are looking for articles on any aspect of the construction industry. If you are particularly interested in writing to a theme we have a couple of topics that we will be focusing on in future issues:

Career development our **February 07 Issue**
Sustainability and planning for our future, our **April 07 Issue**
How green is your building?, our **June 07 Issue**

We are happy to receive both short and long articles. To get your article in the next issue of NAWIC NEWS send your word document to the editor at the following address:

nsweditor@nawic.com.au

Staying In Touch

Construction Critters

NAWIC's parents group meet every second Tuesday. The group is aimed at maintaining your construction network while on maternity/paternity leave and give you somewhere to talk "shop" with like minds. For more information contact Natasha on **0408 432 550** or Sharon on **0422 032 449**.

A Cautionary Word...

At NAWIC (NSW) we like to capture the moments of networking fun that we have at our events. Therefore we would like to notify all our members and guests that unless you mention to us at the time that a photo is taken, that you would prefer for your photo not to be used, we will assume that we have your permission to use the photo on either our website or in our newsletter.

Thanks to our sponsors...

