

PRECAST INDUSTRY GATHERS AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

National Precast Concrete Association Australia's Sydney National Conference has emerged as a crucial event for the sector as around 150 of the country's leading precasters joined with suppliers and allied professionals to learn and network.

Led by National Precast CEO Sarah Bachmann and President Jeff Stratford, the three-day conference ran from 30th October to 1st November in Coogee, New South Wales. Leviat was the Conference Partner for the Event.

While National Precast holds a similar event earlier in the year – in 2023 in the gorgeous Barossa Valley – this annual event began with a Welcome Reception and Trade Exhibition, sponsored by Reid Construction Systems.

Notable industry participants such as Leviat, Reid Construction Systems, CONQA, PSA, ConXedge, BOSFA, ECOTONE, PROGRESS GROUP, Barrason's Engineers, Actech, Peikko, Hagane Systems, APTUS, and Bennett Equipment showcased their latest technology to the industry. On offer was information about quality assurance software for new structural precast connections – essential information for the precast industry to stay ahead of its game and offer smart, sustainable solutions to the construction industry.

National Precast's CEO Sarah Bachmann says the Conference attendance was unprecedented. While the exhibition continued on day two – Conference Day – keynote speakers as well as industry leaders stepped onto the stage to share their insights.

Fair Work Commission Deputy President Peter Hampton provided an update on the

implementation of multi-employer bargaining options as well as a guide to what the Commission considers when hearing unfair dismissal matters.

Meanwhile, James Webster, Senior Construction Advisor at WorkSafe Victoria, discussed WorkSafe's 'Pre-cast Panel Project'. This initiative entailed a thorough examination of six primary hazards across the industry as it took a deep dive into twenty precast businesses in Melbourne. Common hazards including respirable crystalline silica (RCS), cranes and lifting equipment, panel storage, hazardous manual handling, vehicles and traffic management, and panel design and quality assurance were all explored.

Leviat Australia's National Technical Manager, Brett King, and Engineering Team Leader for Precast, Ali Asgari, delved into discussions on new durable and resilient connection solutions. These solutions are specifically crafted to overcome existing challenges associated with precast connections, simultaneously aiming to speed construction and decrease the cost and complexity of precast construction.

Of great interest to the audience was Daniel Nassar's presentation. As Managing Director at Alpha Precast, Daniel shared his insights into his company's rigorous approach to contracting. Having been initially faced with resistance, he outlined the strategies he has implemented to sustain his position and illustrated the positive impact these measures have had on his business.

Attendees also had the opportunity to hear from Fleur Heazlewood, Director at The Blueberry Institute, who discussed

psychological safety. Sarah Hammond, Partner at Moray & Agnew, addressed the termination of project contracts, while Matt Press, Executive Director of Compliance & Dispute Resolution at SafeWork and Fair Trading NSW, shared progress with the work of the NSW Building Commissioner and associated roadblocks and modernisation opportunities.

Concluding the conference, Jeff Stratford, Euro Precast's General Manager in Queensland, shared insights into the company's adept management of challenges associated with manufacturing and installing precast elements for the prominent Mondrian Gold Coast project. He revealed the implications of reinforcement congestion and discussed mould manufacturing, drafting considerations, the use of form liners, the company's in-factory and onsite quality assurance procedures, offsite payment processes, audits, inspections and approvals, as well as delivery and installation. Additionally, Stratford emphasised the pivotal role of support from National Precast partnerships in navigating and overcoming challenges as they arose.

To conclude day two, participants indulged in a Networking Dinner sponsored by PSA and PROGRESS GROUP. The following day included an interactive factory tour of the Metro West Tunnel.

During the dinner, National Precast recognised several members for achieving membership milestones of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 years.

Particularly noteworthy, Rod Mackay-Sim was awarded Life Membership in recognition of his outstanding dedication to the precast industry over the past 40 years.

"Rod's dedication to the precast industry, especially his fervour for enhancing safety, has been truly exceptional," said Stratford.

"We are proud to have Rod as part of our National Precast community and immensely grateful for his contributions to the industry."

In addition, Sarah Bachmann was recognised for her 20 years of service as the CEO of National Precast.

"Sarah's passion, dedication, sleepless nights and laughter have helped all of us grow and be successful in our respective businesses," said Stratford.

"On behalf of the Association and our members, I was so pleased to recognise Sarah's amazing tenure with a 20-year service award and gift."

Bachmann says the next conference is planned for Brisbane in late March, with the next big event being held later in the year in Melbourne.

"We promise the programme will make the March event one that the industry will want to attend," she said.



