

ROADS REVIEW

THIS MONTH, WE ASKED THE INDUSTRY'S DECISION-MAKERS, WHAT CAN THE INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR DO BETTER TO NARROW THE EXISTING SKILLS GAP?



MATTHEW BERENI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

To close the skills gap in the infrastructure sector, we must ensure skills at all levels are properly recognised on the Skills Occupation List, allowing us to fill critical roles with the right overseas talent. Nationally standardising training and qualifications – without increasing costs – will help skilled workers move where they're needed most. We also need to promote diversity and inclusion, especially among women, First Nations people, and young Australians. Finally, we should clearly outline career paths so prospective job seekers fully understand the range of opportunities available within our industry.

Image: Traffic Management Association of Australia



CRAIG MOSS, DIRECTOR CAPABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT – AUSTRALIAN FLEXIBLE PAVEMENT ASSOCIATION

To address the skills gap, the sector must prioritise industry-led learning and development programs specifically designed to meet the needs of the workforce, especially in regional areas and for local governments. Practical, hands-on training developed and delivered by industry experts ensures that the skills taught are relevant, builds capacity, and supports long-term workforce retention. Additionally, incentivising procurement practices to support capability development and adopting new technologies will help attract new talent. Collaboration among government, industry, and education providers is essential; however, leadership should primarily come from the industry.

Image: Australian Flexible Pavement Association



SARAH BACHMANN, EXECUTIVE ADVISOR – NATIONAL PRECAST CONCRETE ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

Educational resources dedicated to precast concrete are finally here to help close a critical knowledge gap in our construction workforce. With the National Precast Micro-Credentials – supported and funded by the Queensland Government – workers can now access the first online, industry-built training, dedicated entirely to precast concrete. Covering topics such as safety, quality, environmental requirements, industry-specific plans and documentation, reinforcement and mould assembly, finishing and curing, as well as lifting and transportation, they give anyone working with or in precast essential knowledge. Free in Queensland and available for a small fee elsewhere, they arrive just as Victoria's Big Build, major New South Wales civil projects, hospitals and the T2D (Torrens to Darlington) project in Adelaide, plus the 2032 Queensland Olympics drive unprecedented demand. With many projects already mandating training, replacing generic courses with targeted learning is the logical choice.

Image: National Precast Concrete Association Australia



RAQUEL RUBALCABA, DEPUTY SECRETARY, INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS AND ENGINEERING – TRANSPORT FOR NSW

We must be honest about the challenges and work together – as government and industry – to solve them. We need policies and targets but these are not the 'silver bullet'. This is why Transport is working with industry on practical actions such as pre-apprenticeship programs and work placements – and seeing dividends. An ongoing call to action for our projects is the prioritisation of the physical and mental health of every worker so that once they are in the industry, they stay in the industry. But unless we can change the culture, we will continue to face significant productivity and labour challenges.

Image: Transport for NSW

If you or someone at your organisation is an industry leader and would like to be a part of this monthly column in 2025, please get in touch with Editor, Tom O'Keane: tom.okeane@primecreative.com.au