

ENGINEERING TAKES LANDMARK STEP TOWARDS TACKLING DIVERSITY

Consult Australia today released results of a landmark benchmarking study into gender diversity within the engineering workforce, marking a critical first step by industry towards proactively overcoming the issue.

Conducted by leading experts from within Australia's top engineering and technical services firms, the study, titled *Diverse Approaches*, compares workforce gender diversity methodologies across the engineering, health, legal, accounting and maritime sectors.

Consult Australia CEO, Megan Motto said that while the industry collectively concedes gender diversity is a major problem, this is the first time it has conducted a self-examination into its effectiveness in addressing the issue.

"Many engineering practices are committed to addressing the gender diversity issue and have been proactive in developing and implementing their own programs and campaigns but there hasn't been a cohesive approach across industry or buy-in from all players," said Ms Motto.

"This research is critical in that it gives us a clear mandate for collective action, supported by objective data."

"*Diverse Approaches* will provide a solid foundation for the development of practical, effective strategies to overcome one of the industry's key challenges."

Consult Australia represents 270 firms, including Australia's 20 largest engineering employers (such as AECOM, Arup, URS, Aurecon and SMEC), all of whom participated in the study.

Diverse Approaches was launched off the back of the results of a 2011 survey that measured the extent to which women are represented in the industry. The same survey also identified differences in pay, turnover and the age of male and female staff in equivalent positions, with a particular focus on technical and managerial roles.

"After quantifying that gender diversity is in fact, a key driver of the skills shortage, the next logical step was this benchmarking study to examine existing best practice within engineering firms and the different ways various other professions and industry sectors have chosen to tackle the workforce diversity issue," said Ms Motto.

In the short-term, *Diverse Approaches* will provide engineering firms with a resource for benchmarking and comparing their workforce diversity activity and allow them to explore key initiatives widely used and endorsed within other industries.

Diverse Approaches identifies visible leadership, setting and measuring targets and attracting and retaining talent as three critical steps towards achieving gender diversity within traditionally male dominated fields.

The study also highlights a common focus across industries on achieving leadership buy-in, up-skilling staff, meeting the needs of employees and finding the best people.

The same panel of experts who conducted the benchmarking study will now begin developing specific recommendations and actions for industry to provide prescriptive, practical steps to encourage the attraction and retention of female talent in the longer term.

"*Diverse Approaches* delivers a valuable gap analysis for future approaches and provides a launching pad for inter-industry discussion of what constitutes best practice," said Ms Motto.

"The onus will be on CEOs and firm leaders to adopt these recommendations and champion commitment to improving gender diversity within the workforce."

Ends

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MEDIA RELEASE

Driving Business Success for Consulting Firms in the Built and Natural Environment

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ABOUT CONSULT AUSTRALIA

Consult Australia is the association for professional services firms within the built and natural environment; influencing policy, creating value and promoting excellence.

As an association, Consult Australia's primary focus is on improving the commercial environment for its members and raising standards across the industry.

Consult Australia's member firms services include, but are not limited to: design; architecture; technology; engineering; planning; landscape architecture; surveying; cost consulting (quantity surveyors); project management; and management solutions. The Association represent some of the industry's biggest players in this space with its member firms collectively employing more than 50,000 staff.