

Culture in Construction

Consultation Guide: updated draft Culture Standard and draft Implementation Resources

January 2025





Acknowledgement of Country

The Construction Industry Culture Taskforce acknowledges that no matter where we are across the country, we are working on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to all First Nations peoples. We acknowledge their ongoing connections to land, sea, sky and waterways and value their rich traditions, storytelling and diverse cultures.

Acknowledgement of CICT

The Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) is a collaboration between the Australian Constructors Association, representing the nation's largest construction firms, the Victorian and NSW Governments and Australia's leading workplace researchers.



Contents

Introduction	4
About this document & Round 2 Consultation	5
Background Information	6
Draft Culture Standard: Round 1 Consultation Process and Outcomes	6
CICT Research Approach and Outcomes	8
Implementing the Culture Standard	11
Updates to the Draft Culture Standard	16
Contact Us.	18



Introduction

Culture in Construction is an initiative of the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce (CICT) comprising the Australian Constructors Association (ACA) representing the nation's largest construction firms, the Governments of New South Wales and Victoria, and Australia's leading workplace researchers.

Since August 2018, the CICT has been working to develop a new Culture Standard to lift the productivity and performance of construction and address three major issues holding back the industry. These are:

- Long working hours hours of work in the industry are excessive, resulting in high rates of turnover, absenteeism, and stress-related leave
- Lack of gender diversity failure to attract and retain women narrows the industry's talent pool and reduces its capacity to deliver projects, and
- Wellbeing stress levels are high and the suicide rate amongst construction workers is double the national average.

A report by BIS Oxford Economics found that the cost of the current culture of the construction industry in Australia regarding wellbeing, diversity and hours of work is approximately \$8 billion annually.

The Culture Standard provides a framework through which clients and contractors can work in partnership to drive change in three key areas of industry culture - time for life, wellbeing and diversity and inclusion.

Further information about the work of the CICT and the Culture Standard is available on the CICT website Construction Industry Culture Taskforce | Together We Are Building A Stronger Construction Industry.



Time for Life: Ensuring our workforce is provided adequate time to rest and pursue life activities outside of work.

Wellbeing: Ensuring the occupational health and mental wellbeing of our workforce is prioritised.

Image 1: Key priorities of the Culture Standard

Diversity and Inclusion:

Ensuring the industry can attract and retain a diverse range of people to work in our industry.



About this document & Round 2 Consultation

The CICT is now seeking feedback on the updated Culture Standard and accompanying Implementation Resources that have been prepared to support the adoption of the Culture Standard.

A key focus of this consultation period (Round 2 Consultation) is ensuring that the requirements of the Culture Standard are clearly expressed, that sufficient guidance information has been provided and implementation resources support effective adoption of the Culture Standard.

This document provides the necessary information to support stakeholder understanding of:

- Initial consultation outcomes (Round 1 consultation phase)
- Work undertaken following the initial consultation period, including pilot projects and key research findings
- Updates made to the Draft Culture Standard based on feedback received and research outcomes
- Implementation resources designed to support the adoption of the Culture Standard
- Round 2 Consultation and mechanisms for providing feedback.

The Round 2 consultation phase will be open from **Monday 27 January – Friday 21 February 2025.**

Note – Consultation on the Diversity Action Planning Guide & Toolkit is being led by Sydney University and will engage subject matter experts and industry representatives.

Providing Feedback

Feedback can be provided during the Round 2 Consultation Phase in the following formats:

- Online Survey
- Meetings and 1-1 briefings with key stakeholders, subject matter experts and industry representatives.

Access to the online survey and documents are available here.



Background Information

This section of the document provides an overview of the process taken to develop the Culture Standard, including the program of research to understand the impact and benefits of the Culture Standard. Image 1 below provides a summary of each key phase.



Image 1: Key phases of Culture Standard Development, Piloting and Consultation.

Round 1 Consultation Process and Outcomes

In October 2021, CICT released "A Culture Standard for the Construction Industry Consultation Paper" to industry stakeholders. Between 17 October 2021 and 10 January 2022, the CICT undertook Round 1 public consultation with construction workers and organisations throughout Australia.

The objectives of the workforce and industry engagement activities were to:

- Undertake activities that would allow workers to gain information on the Actions and Measures proposed under the Culture Standard, within the three Pillars: Wellbeing, Diversity and Inclusion, and Time for Life.
- Engage with workers to gain insight into their initial perceptions and attitudes towards the proposed Actions and Measures.
- Provide opportunity for workers and industry participants to provide feedback on the proposed Culture Standard.

In addition to the planned face-to-face engagement activities, the CICT commissioned a bespoke online interactive website to enable workforce and stakeholder engagement regardless of location or time zone. The purpose of the website was to:

- Raise awareness of the current issues in the industry
- Build momentum for change
- Educate and support industry change within the interactive website, users had the opportunity to agree to Pillar specific pledges and complete three surveys specific to the Wellbeing, Diversity and Inclusion and Time for Life Pillars.



Round 1 Consultation Findings

Feedback from both the workforce-focused 360 website and stakeholder-targeted written submissions activity found a high level of support for improving culture, and for the concept of a Culture Standard as a vehicle to achieve this.

However, participants across the board also raised a range of questions and concerns regarding implementation barriers, cost and delivery impacts, and the suitability of specific measures.

From a workforce perspective there was an underlying scepticism that industry would put improvements to worker quality of life above client interests.

Others, including the two written submissions from Government stakeholders, also questioned if there was a sufficient evidence to substantiate that the Culture Standard would have the intended impact and meaningfully improve economic outcomes, productivity, worker retention, workforce growth and wellbeing.

This feedback indicates that building the requisite industry trust in the Standard will require continued communication, education and engagement.

In parallel, prioritising the delivery of planned pilot studies will provide critical proof-of-concept to stakeholders questioning whether the Standard will deliver against its objectives.

360 Online Engagement Findings

In total, the surveys received 1,256 responses.

Each Pillar contained a number of answerable statements relating to benefits the proposed Culture Standard measures could provide. The sentiment was overall positive towards the measures proposed across the three Pillars.

The areas of highest support related to a Monday to Friday working week (95%) and Mental Health Programs (91%). The areas of lowest support related to Mental Health First Aiders (61%) and focusing on Occupational Health Risks (66%).

Wellbeing

- The Pillar received 754 responses.
- The majority of respondents answered that they agreed or strongly agreed that each of the Wellbeing measures would provide a benefit.

Diversity and Inclusion

- The Pillar received 349 responses.
- The majority of respondents answered that they agreed or strongly agreed that each of the Diversity and Inclusion measures would provide a benefit.

Time for Life

- The Pillar received 138 responses.
- Many respondents answered that they agreed or strongly agreed that each of the Time for Life measures would provide a benefit.

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CICT Research Approach and Outcomes

The development and implementation of a Culture Standard for the construction industry is a world leading initiative. Consequently, a robust and rigorous program of research has been supported by the CICT to understand the industry's response to and impact of the Culture Standard.

The research program aimed to:

- Canvas the perspectives of key industry stakeholders relating to the need for and implementation of cultural change, and
- Evaluate the effects of implementing the Draft Culture Standard at five Pilot Projects.

A multidisciplinary team of researchers from RMIT University, the University of Melbourne/University of Sydney and the Australian National University was engaged to understand the response to and impact of the Draft Culture Standard. Economists were also engaged to work alongside the research team to undertake an analysis of the costs and benefits associated with implementing the Draft Culture Standard.

Research activity has incorporated:

- Literature review exploring the relationships between work hours, health, safety, and gender equality.
- Examination of NSW Government Infrastructure Trainees' intention to pursue a career in construction.
- Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of the Draft Culture Standard at five Pilot Projects.
- Examination of key decisionmakers' perceptions of the Draft Culture Standard.
- Cost benefit analysis of the Draft Culture Standard.

A number of research reports have been produced as a result of this work. Reports are available on the CICT website **here**

RMIT University has prepared a final report capturing the impacts of the Culture Standard across the five Pilot Projects. This final report incorporates the cost benefit analysis undertaken by Frontiers Economics and feedback from Key Decision Makers across Industry and Governments. This report will be made publicly available in early 2025.

Culture Standard Pilot Projects

To strengthen the evidence base for adoption, the Culture Standard has been piloted on five (5) projects in the jurisdictions of NSW and Victoria encompassing a range of project and contract types.

The pilot project program sought to assess the benefits of reduced work hours, flexibility and access to mental health, wellness and leadership training on productivity, capacity and retention rates.

Using a longitudinal research design, surveys and interviews were conducted at five Pilot Projects between November 2022 and May 2024. Multiple waves of survey and interview data were collected at the Pilot Projects.

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The provisions of the Draft Culture Standard were implemented differently at each Pilot Project, highlighting that construction projects can exercise considerable control over how the Culture Standard requirements are met in a particular project context and requirements do not assume a 'one size-fits-all' approach.

More about the Culture Standard Pilot Projects is available here.

Pilot Projects - Key Findings

Aggregated data collected at the Pilot Projects shows majority support for the five-day week and modified working time arrangements. Research participants' perceptions of the Culture Standard have been positive across these Projects.

Pilot Project Interview participants were overwhelmingly in favour of the Draft Culture Standard. In addition to the 50- hour weekly cap and 5-day working week, participants were provided with a range of initiatives which supported their time for life and wellbeing.

Time for Life

- 93% of salaried and 71% of waged workers indicated a **preference for working a 5-day week**.
- Prioritisation of **flexibility** was valued by participants as they were able to negotiate work times for personal matters with their supervisors.
- Waged workers have reported the **effects on pay** has been minimal and they consider this outweighed by the benefits of increasing time with family and friends.
- Interview participants believe that **productivity** is **not adversely impacted** by work hours caps. This is due to lower productivity on Saturdays and improved outputs from a rested workforce.
- Having experienced the benefits of the 5-day week, some waged workers indicated they would no longer be willing to work six days per week. However, some waged workers preferred to work a 6-day or 7-day week so as to maximise their income.

66

The overwhelming response from the workers was they all benefited and enjoyed the five day aspect of it...There's a lot more structure, it's a lot more organised. When you have a Saturday, people are banking on things to happen, they don't happen. All of a sudden the whole plan for the weeks in disarray and then you're chopping and changing and...it's a lot more frantic. Whereas (on this job) it's been a clear, concise plan the whole way through that's been able to be maintained and there's very minimal deviation from what was originally proposed.



Diversity

- The implementation of initiatives to support inclusion of women were seen as beneficial as
 the women indicated they mostly feel respected in their workplaces. Any concerns they
 raised about inappropriate comments and remarks were quickly and effectively addressed by
 their managers.
- The majority of women interviewed indicated they had experienced a positive and respectful workplace where they felt valued and welcome.

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I would describe the culture as very good. It was probably something I was a bit worried about when I started in the industry, being a young female, but there's more females in this office than there were in my previous office.

Woman in a site-based role.

Wellbeing

• The provisions of facilities and programs to support wellbeing created a culture where workers perceived their health and wellbeing to be well-supported by their managers.

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This is the first time in a long while that I've had a good work-life balance. I'm enjoying it. I'm not burnt out.

Man in a site-based role

Cost Benefit Analysis - Key Findings

Frontier Economics was engaged to analyse the outcomes from Pilot Projects and to explore whether, and how, the implementation of the Time for Life provisions in the Culture Standard:

- Has affected productivity in the Construction sector and
- Led to other benefits or costs for workers, the industry and society more broadly.

The Culture Standard's Time for Life provisions require organisations to program their project to ensure that all workers work 5 days 7, ideally Monday to Friday, and no more than 50hrs or less per week.

Findings of the Cost Benefit Analysis found no evidence to suggest that the Draft Culture Standard adversely affected the cost or time required to deliver the Pilot Projects. Nor was there any evidence that project safety performance was impacted.

The analysis found that the projects adopting the Draft Culture Standard had improved retention with the potential for avoided costs of between \$386-771m paⁱ. Estimates are of value to NSW and Victoria (FY\$25) based on the assumption that broad rollout of the Culture Standard in these states generate outcomes similar to those observed on the pilot projects.



Implementing the Culture Standard

The objective of the CICT is for the Culture Standard to be implemented on public sector projects via infrastructure procurement processes in each Australian jurisdiction. This will involve the following implementation pathway:

- 1. Clients prioritising implementation of the Culture Standard early in the project lifecycle and highlight this as part of the request for tenders.
- 2. Contractors demonstrating how they will achieve the requirements of the Culture Standard to the client as part of their tender.
- 3. Clients evaluating a contractor's approach as part of the decision making regarding the shortlisting and section of the successful tenderer for the project.
- Clients and Contractors working together across project delivery and handover of the project to ensure compliance to the Culture Standard objectives committed to at tender time.

An **Implementation Working Group (IWG)** was convened to develop an implementation approach that will enable effective adoption of the Standard by both Governments and Clients.

The IWG commenced its work in mid-2024 to develop a suite of resources to support the implementation of the Culture Standard. Since this time a series of sub working groups have been established, bringing together subject matter experts and industry representatives with the requisite knowledge, skill and background to develop implementation resources on behalf of the CICT.

Key deliverables of the IWG and sub workings groups are:

- Development of tools and resources to support clients and contractors to implement the Culture Standard.
- Identify and document case study examples of how the Culture Standard can be implemented.

Resources prepared by the IWG are available for feedback and comment during this consultation period.



Overview of Implementation Resources

The below tables provide an overview of the Implementation Resources developed via the IWG and sub working groups.

These resources are designed to support the implementation of the Culture Standard. Importantly, the development of these resources has considered the need to retain flexibility in approach where resources can be adapted to suit a variety of project types and operating contexts.

When reviewing the implementation resources the CICT requests this need for flexibility is kept in mind. Our intent is to balance resources adding value without being prescriptive or rigid. At times, this may be perceived as resources being too generic in nature.

Once finalised, Implementation Resources will be made freely available via the CICT website.

Project Culture Survey	
Overview	Key Inclusions
Survey tool to be administered to a project workforce to measure and track worker experience with the Culture Standard. ¹	 This Implementation Resource includes: Survey Tool Dashboard to display results (for use by head contractor User Guide (Guidance information on how to administer the tool and use results).

Table 1: Implementation Resource 1: Project Culture Survey

Implementation Guide for embedding the Culture Standard in procurement activity (client guide)		
Overview	Key Inclusions	
This Guide has been developed for organisations planning to adopt the Culture Standard as part of construction works procurement. It is an implementation resource that supports organisations by: • Providing guidance to support Culture Standard implementation using four key stages	 This Implementation Resource includes: Overview of Culture Standard implementation pathway via procurement Implementation Success Factors – Learnings from CICT Pilot Projects Planning process for Culture Standard Adoption – 4 x stages for adoption 	

¹ Note: This resource has been developed by RMIT. The development process involves detailed consideration of questions sets that have a high degree of validity in tracking their intended focus. This means that questions included are built of an extensive evidence base and best practice workforce survey tool. As a result, there is limited opportunity to change wording as this would degrade the validity of the survey. This resource will not be available for consultation, but CICT welcomes comments on the purpose and application of the survey tool.

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- Recommending key actions that support practical and effective implementation
- Outlining considerations and actions aligned with key procurement phases
- Providing resources and templates to support implementation activity.
- Current state assessment tool Identify where activities / policies align with Culture Standard requirements
- Example Contract Wording
- Example Tender Documentation and Returnable Wording
- Culture Standard Research Summary

 benefits / findings of Culture

 Standard Implementation.

Table 2: Implementation Resource 2 - Implementation Guide for embedding the Culture Standard in procurement activity (client guide)

Wellbeing Action Planning Guide and Toolkit Overview **Key Inclusions** This Guide has been developed to support This Implementation Resource includes: the construction sector to deliver on the Overview of Culture Standard Wellbeing objectives of the Culture Wellbeing requirements Standard. Workplace wellbeing program success It is an Implementation Resource that factors – learnings from Pilot Projects supports organisations by: 5 Step approach to developing a Providing step-by-step guidance to project Wellbeing Action Plan that support planning for driving positive delivers on Culture Standard wellbeing outcomes within the requirements (planning) construction sector 5 Step approach to implementing Identify opportunities to embed wellbeing action plan to deliver on wellbeing initiatives and programs **Culture Standard requirements** (doing). Identify factors that may negatively impact on wellbeing within the Included Toolkit Resources: workplace Workplace wellbeing current state Provide access to resources and tools assessment tool useful in informing the development Occupation health and wellbeing risk of a Wellbeing Action Plan. assessment tool Wellbeing Action Plan template Resourcing plan – suggested roles and responsibilities Understanding wellbeing risk factors Initiatives, interventions & actions that support health and wellbeing outcomes Support services & links.

Table 3: Implementation Resource 3 - Wellbeing Action Planning Guide and Toolkit



Time for Life Action Planning Guide and Toolkit

Overview	Key Inclusions
This Guide has been developed to support the construction sector to deliver on the Time for Life objectives of the Culture Standard. It is an Implementation Resource that supports organisations by:	 This Implementation Resource includes: Overview of Culture Standard Time for Life requirements Time for Life key success factors – learnings from Pilot Projects
 Providing step-by-step guidance to support planning for delivering on Time for Life requirements and enhancing flexible work within the 	 5 Step approach to developing a project Time for Life Action Plan that delivers on Culture Standard requirements (planning)
 Identify opportunities to embed flexible work options 	 5 Step approach to implementing Time for Life Action Plan to deliver on Culture Standard requirements (doing).
 Implementing approaches to track and monitor work hours and flexibility in the workplace 	Included Toolkit Resources: • Current State Assessment
Provide access to resources and tools useful in informing the development of a Time for Life Action Plan.	 Time for Life Action Plan template Time for Life Plan Worked Example Work Hour Tracking (methods, workflows, tools, worked example of 'No code app & dashboard) 5 in 7 work week key considerations Flexibility opportunities by role type Initiatives, interventions & actions that

Table 4: Implementation Resource 4 - Time for Life Action Planning Guide and Toolkit

Overview	Key Inclusions
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This Guide has been developed to support the construction sector to deliver on the	This Implementation Resource includes:
Diversity objectives of the Culture Standard.	 Overview of Culture Standard Diversity requirements
It is an Implementation Resource that supports organisations by:	Diversity key success factors – learnings from Pilot Projects
 Providing step-by-step guidance to support planning for delivering on Diversity requirements 	Step by step approach to developing a project Diversity Action Plan that

Case Studies.



- Identify opportunities to enhance workforce diversity and female representation within the sector
- How to create inclusive work environments that lead to enhanced diversity outcomes
- Provide access to resources and tools useful in informing the development of a Diversity Action Plan.
- delivers on Culture Standard requirements
- Step by step approach to implementing a Diversity Action Plan to deliver on Culture Standard requirements (doing).
- Toolkit of resources and templates.

Table 5: Implementation Resource 5: Diversity Action Planning Guide and Toolkit

Culture Standard Measurement Framework Overview **Key Inclusions** To assess performance the Measurement This Implementation Resource includes: Framework has adopted a maturity model Maturity Scale and scoring system. The primary benefits of Measurement Assessment Tool this approach are: Scoring Framework. Enables effective measurement of performance against the Standard without prescribing or mandating specific targets. This supports maintaining the non-prescriptive nature of the Culture Standard and its application in a range of settings and contexts. Provides an approach that can be adopted in line with and complementary to existing jurisdictional targets and reporting requirements. Provides an ability to measure performance and identify opportunities for growth, continuous improvement and innovation. Reveals information about an organisations current performance, where they are not meeting requirements of the Standard and where there is opportunity for further growth.

Table 6: Implementation Resource 6: Culture Standard Measurement Framework



Updates to the Draft Culture Standard

The updated draft Culture Standard is now available for feedback. The draft Culture Standard has been updated to:

- Address feedback received during Round 1 consultation
- Respond to stakeholder feedback received since initial drafting
- Reflect Pilot Project findings and learnings.

To support stakeholder understanding of proposed changes within the updated Culture Standard a summary of key changes is available in the below table (Table 7).

The updated draft Culture Standard has been provided in a format that allows stakeholders to see the changes made to the document. This will ensure all stakeholders can clearly see where updates have been made. The document is available on the Round 2 Consultation page on the CICT website.

Pillar	Feedback	Change reflected in updated Culture Standard
Time for Life		Response Time for life requires focus on a 5 in 7 work week. Updated wording: Element 2.1 Construction workers work 5
		days in 7
		All workers work 5 days in 7, with access to two consecutive days of rest and no more than 50 hours per week. Individual workers should ideally work Monday to Friday providing access to weekend days that are typically conductive to Time For Life pursuits.
		Whilst projects adopting the Culture Standard may operate beyond 5 days a week (i.e. 24/7) organisations will:
		 Ensure all workers work 5 days in 7 with access to two consecutive days of rest Target that all workers work ≤50 hours / week, and Ensure that no workers work >55 hours / week.
Diversity	Recommendation: Improve alignment with WGEA reporting requirements.	Response: Amended wording as follows: Organisations are to:
		Identify and disclose Gender Pay Gaps in line with Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012
		Develop and implement a plan to reduce gender pay gaps.



Pillar	Feedback	Change reflected in updated Culture Standard
Diversity	Recommendation: Reword header 'The Construction Industry has eliminated Gender Pay Gaps' to 'The Construction Industry Will Close Gender Pay Gaps.'	Response: Proposed wording adopted.
Diversity	Recommendation: Consider overlap with existing policies that had a Gender focus and how the Standard can be implemented alongside these.	Response: Amend wording as follows: Organisations are to: Undertake a workforce assessment for the project and available job roles to identify opportunities for increasing workforce diversity and female representation across decision making roles and critical workforce segments including trade roles and occupations where women are traditionally underrepresented. Set and disclose targets to increase representation of women in these critical workforce segments Develop a plan to achieve these targets on the project and provide the plan and targets to clients as part of tender documentation. When establishing project targets organisations are to ensure: Targets proposed are underpinned by any applicable jurisdictional or client requirements Targets proposed surpass current industry averages linked to the representation of women in sector.
Diversity	Recommendation: Consider appropriate amenities for all, not just women.	Response: Wording amended to: Organisations will provide workplace amenities that support the health, wellbeing and hygiene needs for all workers, particularly women. This will be achieved by ensuring access to appropriate amenities and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Table 7: Summary of key changes to updated Culture Standard.



Contact Us

More information about the Culture Standard and this consultation phase is available at the Culture in Construction website or by contacting the CICT by email at info@cultureinconstruction.com.au .