

Gender balance: Bringing our strategy to life



Our team on Sydney's Central Station Metro (CSM) is bringing our Gender Diversity Action Plan (GDAP) to life, driving greater gender diversity in our team. In 2018, 11.7% of the project's leadership team were female. Fast forward to 2023 and that is now 33.3%, having peaked at 50% at the height of delivery.

Our Graduate Development Programme has contributed to this positive outcome. In 2019, the programme set a 50/50 gender split target for new graduates, and this target has been achieved ever since, showing that focused effort delivers results.

The project has also exceeded the GDAP target of 25% of senior roles on projects filled by women by 2025. While recruitment has been key to this, the team invested in 'growing our own'. 24% of women were promoted during their tenure, and a further 19% were promoted into their next roles following their time on CSM.

The team has also embraced our equal parenting policy, with a particular increase in men taking primary carer leave – 25% of all primary carers leave taken during CSM's delivery has been by fathers. We know that enabling any parent to take paid parental leave creates real culture change within an organisation.

“When I started with Laing O’Rourke ten years ago, it was rare to encounter female engineers in a delivery role. It has been so inspiring to see so many female engineers working at the CSM Project, and the engagement and diversity it brings to the project. The 50:50 gender ratio of my team has happened organically and is a result of Laing O’Rourke’s gender diversity initiatives and inclusive culture.”

Jessica Breen, Project Leader

While there is still a lot of work to be done to reach gender parity, there are certainly pockets of excellence where we are seeing our gender targets and initiatives come to life on our projects, and CSM is just one example.

Over on the Transport Access Program Tranche 3 (TAP3), being delivered by Laing O’Rourke, on behalf of Transport for NSW (TfNSW), the team has driven gender equality outcomes through both leadership commitment and by proposing Key Result Areas (KRAs) to be included in the Contract requirements.

The requirement was to maintain a minimum of 50% representation of women for 80% of the programme. This was achieved as a result of targeted recruitment of women for the initial team formation and retention of females on the project.

The project embraced multiple flexible working arrangements. In an industry that has historically operated on a 6:30am to 6:30pm working day, five or six days per week, proposing new ways to work that are effective is hugely significant. At the commencement of the project, the Senior Leadership Team developed the Best Flex Fit (BFF) Plan. The plan defines BFF for the project and sets out a guiding structure for how this is managed throughout the duration of the programme. The plan creates flexibility in the way the team goes to work, removes stigma associated with flexible working and allows each person on the project the opportunity to create a better work life balance that applies to them without compromising the responsibilities of their role.

We proposed a KRA to TfNSW, to achieve BFF with at least 50% of the team reporting take up of flexible options after 12 months. The TAP3 team has exceeded this KRA, with 70% of the team taking up a form of flexible working.

TfNSW has been supportive of gender equality targets on the project. Having a supportive client has been a key enabler of this success.