

AUSTRALIAN FLEXIBLE PAVEMENT ASSOCIATION

# Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap for the Flexible Pavement Industry



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# FOREWORD

The Australian Flexible Pavement Association (AfPA) is firmly committed to fostering workforce diversity and inclusion and supporting workplaces that respect and value all people.

AfPA recognises the positive benefits an inclusive workforce plays on all aspects of our lives. Attracting the best talent drives innovation, builds organisational capability, increases productivity and best practice outcomes - this ensures a stronger industry which supports the maintenance and delivery of our most valuable asset, our roads.

The building and construction sector ranks as one of the three highest creators of economic value in Australia, and the second biggest employer. To continue to be at the forefront, the sector needs to draw from the widest pool of talent the country has to offer. To address the high levels of skill shortages across a number of occupations within our industry, it is critical that we act decisively to promote and attract new entrants and retain our people.

Workplace diversity and inclusion is not a given, and there is no quick fix to the current disparities. It requires proactive leadership, accountable commitments, cultural change, and measurable outcomes-based initiatives that promote and support a safe and respectful workplace where people feel they belong.

On behalf of AfPA, I am proud to launch AfPA's first National Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap (Roadmap).

This Roadmap has been developed through extensive industry-specific research and in-depth stakeholder consultation, and provides a clear national plan for industry, Government and AfPA to improve the representation of all communities across the flexible pavement industry. The Roadmap outlines strategies and actions across 'attraction', 'recruitment', 'retention' and 'career-development' of people for the flexible pavement industry.

This Roadmap is an outcome of work undertaken by the AfPA National Diversity and Inclusion Committee. I want to acknowledge and thank Kym Murphy, Chairperson of the Committee, the Committee representatives and Lise Sperling, AfPA Executive Director, NSW/ACT and AfPA National Diversity and Inclusion Lead. I want to sincerely thank you for your dedication and work to achieve positive cultural change for our industry.

We can all take action to promote and foster diversity and inclusion in our industry. I truly believe that it is not contingent on your role within an organisation, the size of your business or the discipline in which you work. Everyone in every part of the flexible pavement industry can make positive changes that will result in better outcomes for our people and the broader flexible pavement industry.

**Carlos Rial**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Australian Flexible Pavement Industry**



# MESSAGE FROM THE AFPA DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

AfPA's Diversity and Inclusion Committee was formed in early 2022 to identify and address the long-standing lack of diversity across our industry and encourage systemic workplace practices, leadership, professional development and culture to prioritise inclusion. It is my absolute privilege to be the inaugural Chair for this Committee and to be part of "the ripple of change" AfPA is driving in our industry.

The Committee is one practical and effective form to collaborate and address key issues concerning equity and diversity for the industry going forward. Representatives are encouraged to share their lived experiences in working in the flexible pavement industry, their views on which strategies are working in their own places of work, or not, and their ideas on new strategies that can be developed.

At the outset, the Committee representatives were asked to share their journey and what it is that attracted them to nominate for our Committee. There were a number of profound personal and professional experiences shared that were common to the group and reflect a number of challenges still met by our workforce today.

The common theme being a strong desire and willingness to develop a guiding framework, and identify initiatives, to attract a greater representation of the community into our industry, to ensure that from a young age people are aware of the variety of work those employed in our industry actually do (and that it can be really fun), to ensure a 'fair-go' through recruitment, and to work in a place where people feel valued.

The formation of the Committee demonstrates AfPA's strong commitment to a diverse workforce and inclusive workplaces in the flexible pavement industry. The added value for our Committee members and their sponsoring organisations is the provision of training and development opportunities for the members, opportunities to network and exchange information with each other, and to be empowered to be part of real change in our industry.

The practical initiatives outlined in AfPA's Roadmap will create sustainable and long-lasting change for a more inclusive future not only for the flexible pavement industry, but for the building and construction sector nationally as a whole.

**Kym Murphy**  
Chairperson  
AfPA Diversity and Inclusion Committee



## ABOUT AfPA

The Australian Flexible Pavement Association (AfPA) is the peak body for the multi-billion dollar flexible pavement industry in Australia.

For over 50 years, AfPA has represented the flexible pavement industry to lead safety, sustainability, innovation, knowledge, and collaboration outcomes unified voice on the advancement of flexible pavement technology for the benefit of all road users.

Our membership brings together a unique and diverse collective of industry, all state road authorities and a number of Councils from across Australia. AfPA represent our members and act as a source of technical and reference information for both industry and governments nationally.

We are proud to provide a range of services to our members including a wide suite of training courses, regular industry events and technical advice on a national and state basis.

AfPA works to deliver the following positive outcomes:

- support our industry to be healthy, safe, innovative, sustainable and inclusive
- build a solid understanding of our industry with key stakeholders
- support the national harmonisation of best practice
- drive a culture of continuous improvement
- ensuring value for our members

While our focus has changed over the years, AfPA continues to work hard to represent the interests of the industry and to develop a diverse range of products and services for our members across Australia.

AfPA recognises the positive benefits an inclusive workplace plays on all aspects of our lives – attracting the best talent drives innovation, productivity and best practice outcomes.

AfPA is firmly committed to working in partnership with stakeholders to deliver this Roadmap, fostering a diverse workforce and inclusive workplaces across the entire flexible pavement industry.



# WHAT IS WORKPLACE ‘DIVERSITY’ AND ‘INCLUSION’?

Diversity refers to the mix of people in an organisation and all the differences between people in how they identify in relation to their:

*Social Identity* e.g. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, age, caring responsibilities, country of origin, cultural background, disability status, gender, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, and socio-economic background.

*Professional Identity* e.g., profession, education, work experiences, organisational level, functional area, division/ department, and location.

These aspects come together in a unique way for each individual and shape the way they view and perceive their world and workplace – as well as how others view and treat them.<sup>1</sup>

Inclusion refers to getting the mix of people in an organisation to work together to improve performance and wellbeing. Inclusion of diversity in a workplace is achieved when a diversity of people (e.g., ages, cultural backgrounds, genders, perspectives) feel that they are:

- Respected for who they are and able to be themselves;
- Connected to their colleagues and feel they belong;
- Contributing their perspectives and talents to the workplace; and
- Progressing in their career at work (i.e. equity of access to opportunities and resources).

Diversity in the workplace means that you employ people from a wide range of backgrounds. Working with a team of diverse employees will enhance your business through different perspectives, experience and knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

## BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace is beneficial for a number of reasons:

- to drive innovation and productivity for business and the economy,
- to attract a broader high-quality talent pool of candidates to strengthen the workforce and address skills-shortages to ensure a future pipeline of candidates,
- to promote creative thinking, offers employees new experiences and development opportunities,
- to improve staff health and wellbeing, and improving employee retention,
- to lower the risk of discrimination and harassment in the workplace,
- to increase the reputation and presents our industry as an employer of choice,
- to inspire the next generation of our industry workforce, and
- to make connections and give greater meaning to local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Diversity Council of Australia, 2023. <https://www.dca.org.au/di-planning/getting-started-di/diversity-inclusion-explained>

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government, 2022. [www.business.gov.au](http://www.business.gov.au)

# SNAPSHOT OF THE FLEXIBLE PAVEMENT INDUSTRY PROFILE

Historically, the building and construction sector has been characterised as one of the most male-dominated sectors in Australia. Moreover, women have traditionally held ancillary support roles in our industry, with limited opportunities in more purist construction roles which affects the overall retention.

Whilst this profile is shifting to reflect the modern community, industry is seeking to be at the forefront to debunk the myths and contribute to the growing momentum and cultural change that is embracing the opportunities of attracting different people with different skillsets, expertise and backgrounds to the flexible pavement industry.

It is critical to understand the barriers and challenges limiting the opportunities for a diverse and inclusive flexible pavements industry, including:

- stereotypes, sexism and perceptions of the nature of the workplace and job sites, as well as the work-related activities including underlying assumptions that the industry work is dirty, dangerous and physically unsuitable for some people,
- a lack of information available and promotion of the industry as a career option and the career pathways,
- fewer minority groups being represented as role models, as a ratio to male role models,
- difficulty with work/life balance, including ineffective programs to assist women returning to work after caring for a baby/child(ren).

## National Roadmap Event

On 22 June 2022, AfPA hosted the Flexible Pavement National Roadmap Diversity Event in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane as attended by over 100 representatives from across the industry.

The purpose of the event was to bring our industry representatives and stakeholders together to:

- share their experiences and provide their advice and feedback about how our industry can become more diverse and inclusive,
- share strategies their own businesses have developed and implemented, along with their views on which strategies are working, or not, and
- share ideas on new strategies that can be developed for the industry.
- The feedback and ideas raised in this forum forms the basis of this Roadmap.

## Industry Feedback from the National Roadmap Workshop

Attendees to the National Roadmap Workshop were asked to respond to three questions:

1. What are the three biggest challenges to diversity and inclusion for industry to overcome?
2. What are three actions that could positively impact diversity and inclusion in our industry?
3. What are actions AfPA can assist with to help influence diversity and inclusion in our industry?

A summary of the responses from the Roadmap Event are provided in **Attachment A**

## OVERVIEW OF THE AfPA ROADMAP

AfPA's Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap outlines our commitment and industry informed initiatives to ensure we have a diverse workplace, one that is representative of our community.

This Roadmap is a strategic, prioritised and multifaceted plan that outlines four key Strategies and a number of Actions to:

- address underrepresented segments of our diverse Australian community, with the opportunity for further refinement to drive attraction of groups within the community, and
- to deliver incremental maturity with respect to Disability and Inclusion and tangible outcomes that materially improve the industry's performance across the four key areas of 'Attraction', 'Recruitment', 'Retention' and 'Career Development'.

The four key areas of focus in this Roadmap concern fostering and maintaining a sustainable workforce including: the 'Attraction', 'Recruitment', 'Retention' and 'Career Development' of people into and across the flexible pavement industry. This will be delivered by supporting strategies and actions.

AfPA seeks to establish strategic partnerships to increase the diversity of our workforce and influence decision-makers across the industry on potential areas of investment and rationale for the investment towards inclusion.





# AfPA DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ROADMAP

## *Attracting people into our industry*

### Strategies

- To combat and address the misconceptions and stereotypes about our industry, by providing evidence-based information, visual content of our diverse workforce and demonstrate the positive opportunities and day-in-the-life of the various occupations in our industry to increase the awareness and understanding of the community.
- To develop materials and information that promote the benefits, career pathways and opportunities within the flexible pavement industry.
- To directly engage with potential entrants into the flexible pavement industry and promote the diverse, rewarding and variety of career pathways available.

### Actions

1. Develop and seek agreement from the AfPA Board to an 'AfPA Diversity and Inclusion Charter' as a senior leadership national commitment to recognise and support a diverse and inclusive workforce and lead best practice strategies essential to our workforce.
2. Develop and implement the 'AfPA Community and Engagement Strategy' that will provide a comprehensive communication plan and materials that explains the flexible pavement industry, career pathways and promotes the industry; identify key stakeholders to engage with, how and for what purpose; provide an overarching engagement strategy demonstrating the interfaces and consistent messaging between the AfPA Knowledge Exchange Program, AfPA Diversity and Inclusion Video Campaign, and AfPA Ambassador Program.
3. Develop and implement the 'AfPA National Knowledge Exchange Program' that seeks to engage with all people across all educational establishments (pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary education) to raise awareness and outline the benefits of encouraging young people to consider entering the flexible pavement industry. This will include:
  - engagement with students, parents/carers, careers advisors, Universities/TAFE, State Government authorities involved in training and education, about career pathways and opportunities
  - forums, information sessions, site inspections, work placements/experience, try-a-trade, participating in career events and other opportunities to attract people as designed in collaboration with educational institutions.
4. Develop and implement the 'AfPA Diversity and Inclusion Video Campaign' to provide a visual and audio showcase the diverse backgrounds and their stories/journeys entering and working within the flexible pavement industry. This will demonstrate the different occupations and types of workspaces and career opportunities across Australia.
5. Develop and implement the 'AfPA Ambassador Program' that identifies and showcases the industry and our leaders. Ambassadors will be nominated through the AfPA State and National Gala Awards Program, demonstrating the diversity in skills, experience and background of our industry, presenting at various forums to present on their roles, responsibilities, share stories and career journey's.

## ***Strategies for recruiting people into our industry***

### **Strategies**

- To encourage recruitment communications, images and processes are equitable, accessible and attract a range of suitable candidates.

### **Actions**

1. To work together with industry partners on recruitment material to ensure that they visually demonstrate the diversity of our workforce, include inclusive language to attract a diverse range of applicants, and the selection criteria are inclusive.

## ***Strategies for retaining people in our industry***

### **Strategies**

- To develop best practice industry specific programs that assist to mentor and train our workforce.
- To agree we have a collective responsibility for developing young professionals, and providing knowledge sharing and engagement platforms and opportunities across the flexible pavement industry.

### **Actions**

1. Strengthen the 'AfPA Leaders of Tomorrow Initiative' (ALTI) attract and support young and emerging leaders. AfPA ALTI provides a forum for sharing knowledge, development and engagement of young professionals from across the flexible pavement industry.
2. To develop and implement the 'AfPA Diversity and Inclusion Mental Health and Wellness Program' seeking to establish partnerships with support service providers to champion of mental health and wellbeing, as well as encouraging and supporting policies, strategies, and behaviours that promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the industry.
3. To establish the 'AfPA Data Industry Portal' to provide an evidence base of the industry workforce demographic profile that will assist in better understanding the industry and targeting approaches to ensure a consistent diversity of workers across all occupations.

## ***Strategies for developing the career of people in our industry***

### **Strategies**

- To develop best practice industry specific initiatives that empower and build the capacity and capabilities of the existing workforce.

### **Actions**

1. Introduce senior leadership programs, coaching programs, buddy/mentoring opportunities and training to help build skills, networking, relationships to ensure knowledge exchange throughout our industry.

## Attachment A

### **Culture / Attitudes / Perception and Education / Awareness of industry:**

- Lack of awareness of the opportunities from jobs, training to career pathways.
- Stereotypes about our industry prevent women from seeking employment, and marketing/promotion of jobs is not inclusive to attract women from seeking employment.
- Unconscious bias and predominate traditional mindsets, compounded by a resistance to change influences the profile of the industry i.e. that works is significantly physical labour, long hours/night work – and the idea that the way it is done, is how it has always been done.
- Stigma and perception that our industry is male dominated, and there is a high degree of 'blokey-culture', that diversity/inclusion is a 'women issue', and we are yet to fully realise or embrace the benefits from having a more diver workforce with respect of innovative, performance and productivity.
- Lack of awareness in formative years (school) and family perceptions of the industry and career pathway, and hands-on opportunities to have exposure to the technology and tools.

### **Workplace Environment and HR:**

- Greater advocacy for diversity / inclusion across organisation and stronger senior leadership.
- Enabling recruitment to attract a broad representation of the community, revision in the language of advertising material (too technical).
- Ensuring workplace conditions, suitable and clean amenities and workers feel safe.
- Ensuring workplace hours that improve flexibility and support work/life balance particularly around shift work, and workers feel safe on the job.

## **INDUSTRY FEEDBACK TO ADDRESSING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

### **Culture / Attitudes / Perception**

- Marketing material/collateral that shows the diversity of our workplace (activities) and benefits/opportunities in our industry
- Utilising social media to engage on issues and show the human-side of our industry.
- Ensuring Senior leadership 'buy-in' to diversity and inclusion strategies, and supporting open communications across organisations.
- Increased networking opportunities, workshops and training sessions.
- Gaining clear data and an evidence base on profile of industry and outlining the benefits of diversity and inclusion for our industry and workforce.
- Increase awareness mental health and improving workplace conditions to support safety.

### **Workplace Environment and HR:**

- Industry introducing a clear corporate diversity and inclusion statement, as implemented through endorsed guidance, strategies and actions.
- Changing workplace structures and hours to show genuine commitment to work-life balance and responding to people's different circumstances, this may include restructuring work hours and introducing greater flexibility in shift work.
- Reforming recruitment processes including sharing recruitment statistics, design/screening of advertising, language in advertising that promotes the industry.
- Introduce AfPA 'Diversity and Inclusion' Champions of Change / Ambassadors, to share case studies of successful initiatives and individual pathways.
- Increase senior leadership programs, coaching programs, traineeships and mentoring.

- Industry led site tours of various work sites and facilities.
- Improving the conditions of workplaces for the whole workforce.
- Introducing metrics around diversity and inclusion in procurement.
- Introduce school-based / University Career Pathways opportunities
- Seek partnerships with other NfPs, Community Organisations and other diverse groups including indigenous associations, disability for collaboration.
- Industry to share data on diversity stats and staff feedback.
- Increase representation of industry at schools, career fairs, community groups, elders etc, expos, trade shows
- Introduce AfPA state-based Diversity and Inclusion Committees and initiatives.
- AfPA bridge between employer seeking and those seeking employment opportunities.
- Recognising back-office roles at AfPA award.
- Sponsorship opportunities for migrants - AfPA to promote and educate industry, provide conduit between migrants and companies
- Minimum requirements for inclusion in tenders with a transparent assessment process
- Produce guidance/protocol for excellent /good/bad examples of. Set timeframes/standards

