

# BREAKING GROUND AND BUILDING FUTURES:

2024 NAWIC NSW Awards Celebrate Excellence

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Trailblazing leaders, innovative projects and transformative workplace policies have been rewarded at the 2024 NAWIC NSW Awards for Excellence.

Hosted by the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) NSW Chapter, the event attracted a record 153 nominations across 13 categories, drawing 1,100-plus industry professionals to Sydney's ICC Ballroom to celebrate.

"This is more than an awards night – it is a call to action," said Georgia Coulston, NAWIC NSW Chapter President. "The NAWIC NSW Awards for Excellence spotlight exceptional leadership and challenge the status quo. Together, we have the power to dismantle barriers, lead with empathy and lay the foundations for a future where every contribution builds lasting impact."

Highlighting the critical need for change, Ms Coulston noted that women comprise just

12% of the construction workforce and only 2% of trades – a figure stagnant for over four decades.

"This isn't just a gender challenge; it's an industry-wide opportunity. Elevating women's participation is essential to solving labour shortages, boosting productivity and securing Australia's future."

## Award highlights

**Lendlease Crystal Vision Award:** Natalie Haydon of Multiplex, affectionately known as 'Hard Hat Nat,' was recognised for creating the Jump Start Juniors – Multiplex | LEGO® Australia Learn to Build program. Through engaging workshops, Natalie inspires primary school students to explore careers in construction while championing female leadership.

**Richard Crookes Business Woman of the Year Award:** Sianne Bennett, Head of

Human Resources at Gamuda Australia, was recognised for her transformative leadership. Under her guidance, Gamuda grew from 10 employees to more than 750 in just five years. Sianne's focus on diversity has driven a 30% female workforce and a 65% female graduate participation rate.

**ADCO Champion of Change Award:** Greg Anderson, Alliance Manager for the Mulgoa Road Upgrade Alliance, achieved 31% female representation on his project through a holistic approach to diversity and mentorship. "We encourage more men in the industry to take Greg's lead to innovate, advocate and take risks to create change," Ms. Coulston said.

All finalists show how a diverse construction industry can deliver profound benefits for Australia, Ms Coulston concludes. "Each of us holds the power to address the challenges ahead. But only by working together can we build an industry where everyone thrives."

2024 NAWIC NSW awards for excellence

NAWIC  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

## AWARD RECIPIENTS



**Lendlease Crystal Vision Award**  
Winner: Natalie Haydon

Affectionately known as 'Hard Hat Nat,' Natalie Haydon developed the Jump Start Juniors – Multiplex | LEGO Australia Learn to Build program, inspiring primary school students to explore careers in construction while promoting female leadership through LEGO® and role modelling. During her 13 years with Multiplex, Natalie has balanced site-based roles and parenting. As Design Manager on the \$1.9 billion Western Sydney International Airport project, Natalie is committed to fostering an inclusive environment for women to thrive.



**Richard Crookes Business Woman of the Year Award**  
Winner: Sianne Bennett

As Head of Human Resources at Gamuda Australia, Sianne Bennett has expanded the team from 10 to over 750 employees, achieving a remarkable \$1.2 billion in revenue within five years. Her dedication to diversity and inclusion has resulted in a 30% female workforce and a 65% female graduate participation rate. Sianne played a key role in acquiring DT Infrastructure, diversifying the business and enhancing the company's renewable energy capabilities.



**MPA Award for Achievement in Construction, Refurbishment and Fitout**  
Winner: Brie Ranchhod

Design Manager with Kane Constructions, Brie Ranchhod led refurbishment works at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. By managing multiple design

teams and concurrent milestones, Brie accelerated the program and minimised disruptions. Her meticulous safety and design management ensured timely issue resolution and seamless project execution within a live hospital environment. As a leader of NSW Kane's Women in Construction team, Brie actively mentors female colleagues and champions diversity within the construction industry.



**CPB Contractors Award for Contribution to Sustainability**  
Winner: Robyn Simpson

As the National Manager – Environment and Sustainability at Coates, Robyn Simpson is spearheading strategies that minimise emissions and embodied carbon. Among Robyn's achievements, she led the implementation of data visibility systems across 145 Coates branches, enabling trend analysis to pinpoint sustainability priorities. With this insight, solar panels were installed across 26 branches, and Coates uses almost 70% of the solar energy generated. Robyn's hands-on leadership has inspired a movement towards sustainable practices at Coates.



**Scentre Group Award for Team Innovation**  
Winner: Lendlease Workforce Participation Team

The Lendlease Female Apprenticeship Development and Peer Networking Program was developed to increase engagement and trade completion rates, and to build a robust network for future female tradespeople. Designed by apprentices for apprentices, the program offers coaching and professional development typically reserved for leaders, alongside access to a growing peer network. Lendlease has expanded the initiative to industry





partners, and will soon include male apprentices, fostering allies and creating a more inclusive site culture.



**Hassell Award for Innovation in Design**  
Winner: Afrida Salma

To minimise disruption during construction of the Warringah Freeway Upgrade, CIMIC Group's CPB Contractors Design Engineer Afrida Salma developed an innovative slotted drain system that improved drainage while reducing excavation and construction time. Collaborating with principal designers, the construction team and Transport for New South Wales, Afrida created a solution that lowered the project's carbon footprint, improved performance and enhanced air quality, benefitting both workers and nearby residents.



**Ferrovial Project Manager of the Year Award**  
Winner: Melanie Bowden

As Project Director of the Mindyarra Maintenance Centre project in Dubbo, CPB Contractors' Melanie Bowden has fostered a welcoming workplace for women, surpassing the national average for female representation in construction and exceeding NSW Aboriginal Procurement Policy targets. Through effective communication and team restructuring, Melanie reduced turnover and significantly improved morale. Under her guidance, the project achieved a 'Leading' Design rating from the Infrastructure Sustainability Council, demonstrating the real-world impact of Melanie's leadership.



**Roberts Co Award for Contribution to a Project's Development**  
Winner: Carinne Watson

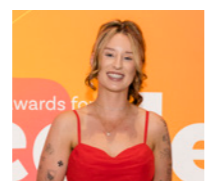
Leveraging her clinical background, CPB Contractors' Health Facility Planner Carinne

Watson proposed an alternative staging strategy for the Royal Prince Alfred hospital redevelopment. Carinne's approach reduced clinical decants – where patients are temporarily moved during construction activities – from eight to one, saving 12 months on the program and \$10 million in costs, while ensuring uninterrupted patient care. Carinne's innovative approach also minimised concurrent work sites, enhancing safety and reducing staff fatigue.



**Laing O'Rourke Future Leader Scholarship**  
Winner: Lufeng Zhang

A chartered civil and environmental engineer, Lufeng Zhang has demonstrated ingenuity and technical acumen in her work for Laing O'Rourke on Sydney Metro projects. Lufeng also helped to redesign procurement processes to enable greater local supplier participation in bushfire recovery construction. A mentor and role model for young women in construction, particularly from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Lufeng has delivered engaging sessions on digital innovation and STEM to high school students.



**Transport for NSW Tradesperson Scholarship**  
Winner: Jordyn Allan

Her family's construction business and a love of tools led her to a carpentry apprenticeship, but Jordyn Allan's career took a turn when she discovered Gamuda's Tunnelling Pre-Employment Program. Relocating from Goulburn to Sydney, Jordyn was the youngest in her cohort. Inspired by the program's personalised support, Jordyn is now pursuing a Certificate III in Electrotechnology, confidently paving her way in the electrical trade and inspiring other women to follow.



**John Holland University Scholarship**  
Winner: Imandee Jayawardena

Exemplifying determination and tenacity, Imandee Jayawardena overcame cultural and gender barriers in Sri Lanka and Australia to forge a rewarding construction career. After 45 unsuccessful job applications to Australian construction companies, Imandee boldly visited a potential employer's head office to showcase her commitment. Her perseverance paid off, and Imandee is now an Assistant Quantity Surveyor with MBM while pursuing a Bachelor of Construction Management at Western Sydney University.



**ADCO Champion of Change**  
Winner: Greg Anderson

As Alliance Manager on the Mulgoa Road Upgrade Alliance, Greg Anderson achieved 31% female representation by embracing a holistic and authentic approach to diversity and inclusion. Greg piloted the Construction Industry Cultural Standard, prioritising flexibility, wellbeing and diversity, and created the 'My Time' flexible work program, now being embedded into all Seymour Whyte

projects. Greg mentors women and actively engages high school students to inspire the next generation of female leaders and create lasting change.



**NAWIC Regional Woman of the Year Award**  
Winner: Eliza Blight

As ADCO's Project Engineer on the Griffith Base Hospital, Eliza Blight led the successful delivery of the façade package. Eliza expertly managed design clashes and material delays, ensuring the building was sealed and watertight so other trades could progress swiftly and recover lost time. Eliza's expertise contributed to the building's aesthetic appeal and long-term functionality. With an enduring commitment to her industry, Eliza also actively mentors other rising stars and inspires schoolgirls to embrace construction careers.

**About NAWIC**

Established in 1995, the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) champions and empowers women in the construction and related industries to reach their full potential. NAWIC's vision is an equitable industry within which women fully participate, and it values are: Courage, In-clusion, Resilience, Integrity, Safety & Wellbeing. See: [www.nawic.com.au](http://www.nawic.com.au)

**About NAWIC NSW Chapter**

The NAWIC NSW Chapter is a passionate group of women who volunteer their time and expertise to host and deliver a range of events aimed at furthering women in the construction industry.

The committee and NAWIC members work in a variety of fields within the construction industry and the Chapter's activities are designed to address the diversity of these

groups. NAWIC NSW's goal is to celebrate the achievements of female colleagues in the construction industry as well as to inform, educate and provide networking opportunities.