

Frequently Asked Questions

The Who, Why and What of Building Futures, Breaking Barriers and how it can move companies towards a respectful, inclusive and future-focused industry

What is the [Building Futures, Breaking Barriers \(BFBB\)](#) project?

1

The BFBB project is an industry-led, collaborative national project reshaping the future of plumbing and fire protection. It is not a compliance exercise or a government directive. Instead, it is a united effort across employers, unions, industry organisations and training providers to build a modern, inclusive, and future-ready industry. The project is developing practical, site-ready solutions to ensure worksites are safe, respectful, and open to everyone.

Who is funding this initiative?

2

BFBB project is funded by the Australian Government's [Building Women's Careers Program](#). To achieve cultural change everyone needs to participate, which is why the project is led by PICAC and supported by a 11 Industry Partners – a powerful alliance of the plumbing and fire protection industry's unions, peak bodies, and major employers.

Why does the plumbing and fire protection industry now need to focus on cultural change?

3

[The research, led by Constructing Equity](#) and commissioned through the BFBB Project, showed this industry is founded on strong bonds, straight-talking, and everyone looking out for their mates. In the past it has also responded well to change - it's why it continues to thrive. Right now, we have a new opportunity for change: demand is strong, the work pipeline is growing, and we need skilled, reliable teams - but people are leaving the industry.

The BFBB research shows that current workplace conditions can, without meaning to, hold people back so they are forced to leave, particularly women. Increasing the level of inclusion in our workplaces so people stay, isn't about changing who we are, it's about building on our existing strengths so that everyone can share in the best of our trade, helping us future-proof our workforce.

What is inclusion in the workplace?

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Workplace inclusion is about creating an environment where everyone regardless of their gender, background, experience, or personal characteristics is respected, valued, and able to fully participate, contribute, and succeed. When workplaces are inclusive, they are safer, more respectful, and better able to attract, retain, and develop the skilled workforce needed for the future.

What are the primary barriers to inclusion identified by the research?

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Through the industry research, we have identified three core barriers.

- The first is **informality**, where critical decisions, dispute resolutions, and safety often rely on subjective supervisor discretion and "unwritten rules" rather than clear standards.
- The second is **rigid behaviour expectations**, where unhealthy masculine stereotypes dictate how people should act or express frustration on site.
- Finally, there is **unequal belonging**, where some workers are forced to rely on extreme resilience and self-advocacy to "earn" their place every day, while belonging is automatically assumed for others.

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What is the Plumbing Industry Cultural Inclusion Maturity Model that is being developed for industry and how will it help companies become more inclusive?

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A Cultural Inclusion Maturity Model is a highly practical, tiered roadmap that allows businesses to gauge their current workplace culture. Instead of acting as a tick-box audit, it will empower employers to identify their strengths and their gaps and confidently build their own tailored 12-month action plans so they can move up the maturity levels.

How will the Project help a company move towards a more inclusive culture?

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After the Cultural Inclusion Maturity Model assessment, companies can use the National Employer Framework the Project is developing. The Framework replaces the "fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants" informality with clear, structured expectations. Rather than handing down generic, corporate HR policies, the Framework provides practical, industry-authentic tools to help employers hardwire respect into how they do business every day.

What training programs are available for staff?

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Building Futures is co-designing a new National Education and Training Program with [The Men's Project](#). This uses a whole-of-organisation approach, with three streams:

- Career Plumbers and Apprentices,
- Senior Leaders and Executives
- Train-the-Trainer program for educators.

Once developed, it will equip staff and crews with practical skills, like active bystander strategies, to safely challenge disrespect and keep the good in the trade.

Is this project relevant to small and medium sized businesses, or just large companies?

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The tools we are building are designed to be highly adaptable so both Tier 1 contractors or small domestic family businesses can use the resources.

What are the next steps for the project?

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The research is complete and the project is currently refining the Cultural Inclusion Maturity Model and the Education and Training program by running pilots with six companies. This means all the resources from the Project will be fully tested and tailored for the industry before they are launched in 2027.

Project Partners

