Family Friendly Work Practices
in the Construction Industry

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Why is BH Interested? (1):

• No. 1 issue of over 200 people who have attended our Leadership and Graduate Development Programmes in past two years.

• Anecdotal evidence that it is also a major issue for Foremen / Supervisors

• High on the list of issues confronting people using our Employee Assistance Programme (Counselling Service)
Why is BH Interested? (2):

- Concern that we are not attracting the highest calibre Graduates to this Industry. (The best are flocking to IT, Services, Communications)

- Concern with turnover of female Graduates after five / six years experience (“need a life”)

- Comment from other Companies: “Our people are looking burnt out in their 30’s and wanting to do other things!”
WORK / LIFE BALANCE

Why is BH Interested? (3):

- May not just be the Construction Industry
- Not in it just to be “nice people”
  - Balanced people are more productive
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Leading Companies
**target this area**
So the questions for us are:

• Does the issue exist? (Some doubt it)
• What is the issue? (Is it money? Recognition? Relationships?)
• How can we respond? (It might not mean more time off work)
Dr. Helen Lingard

- Highly regarded academic
- Worked in the Construction Industry
- Direct experience and passion for the issue
WORK IMPACTS ON FAMILY

- Parenting behaviours
- Family participation
- Perceived conflict
- Satisfaction with partner and family life
- Marital quality
- Divorce rate
Drivers for change include:

- Social policy commitments
- Changing workforce characteristics
- Equity
- Legislative requirements
- Organisational performance
- Mental health of participants
RESEARCH AIMS

- Identify the demographic characteristics of construction industry employees - age, no of children, marital and parental status
- Identify the scope of problem
- Investigate the relationship between job demands and family functioning
- Identify the work/life balance policies currently in place
- Identify the policies most desired by employees
- Formulate recommendations for improving work/life balance
TWO-STAGE METHODOLOGY

• Initial pilot study using a self-administered questionnaire
  - To be distributed through HR managers to stratified random sample of employees

• Follow-up study
  - Longitudinal design (three years)
  - In-depth interviews - to explore relationships further
VARIABLES

- Quality of working life
- Quality of relationship life
- Quality of family life (children)
- Availability of time for family
- Job-family conflict
- Psychological distress/burnout
- Job characteristics

(Dependent)

(Independent)
WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

- Child care
- Elder care
- Flexible work practices
- Permanent part time work
- Parental leave - paid / unpaid
- Empowerment
- Recognition / praise / feedback
- Social support
- Satisfaction

Benefits (Transactional)

Culture (Relational)
OUTCOMES

• Better understanding of the work/family interface in construction

• Recommendations on how to provide a productive workplace that is supportive of employees’ family lives.