



Media Release

Collaboration and certainty needed to save jobs, economy

The peak body representing civil engineering contractors in Queensland is calling for collaboration and certainty from government to avoid further job losses, and to lessen the economic impact on all levels of the infrastructure and construction industries.

The latest report from the Civil Contractors Federation (CCF), has forecast up to one in three jobs could be lost from civil construction by the middle of the year.

The small to medium enterprises that make up CCF's membership report their workforce has already declined by more than 10 per cent since the beginning of the global financial crisis in September 2008.

CCF is calling on the state government to fast-track its record commitment to public infrastructure, to help stabilise an industry that contributed \$16.3 billion to the economy in 2007/08.

CCF Queensland CEO Robert Row said the government needed to instill confidence and certainty that the project pipeline was real, and that the jobs would be coming through.

"We support the government's infrastructure program and have been gearing up for it but unless we start to see the rollout accelerated, our members will be faced with no choice but to lay more people off," he said.

"A key focus for government must be the transition from overall expenditure announcements into real projects, supported by detailed and accurate information that contractors can use to plan future work."

Civil construction has shot to prominence in the past five years in Queensland, recording the sharpest rise in value to the wider economy of the three main industry sectors in building and construction. Its worth has tripled to now represent 40 per cent of the building and construction industry.

"From major bridges to land development, our workforce is representative of a broad cross-section of contractors who play a critical role in the delivery of projects," Mr Row said. "As such, issues affecting our members will have far reaching impacts on the bigger picture.

"Action needs to be taken now to ensure the workforce for the future."

The CCF's industry snapshot has revealed that trainees and apprentices will be some of the hardest hit by a further slowdown in building activity. It estimates the industry's newest members have made up 1 in 10 of the redundancies so far, a figure that will rise to 1 in 6 without evasive action.

"We have worked hard to address what was a skills shortage six months ago," he said. "If we cannot keep those skilled workers employed we risk losing them from the industry for good."

"It is critical that we see works brought to tender immediately so the industry can plan with certainty - and keep Queenslanders in jobs."

Mr Row warned government couldn't afford to delay tendering and approvals for jobs and called for early contractor involvement to accelerate delivery.

"This type of collaborative effort between government and industry will identify key elements of project timelines that can be moved faster through the system to get work happening on the ground."

"Contractors capable of delivering projects less than \$30 million are currently crying out for work. There are great opportunities for innovation in project delivery that would enable these contractors to work together to deliver bigger projects," he said.

"This will help Queensland through the current crisis by protecting local jobs, while delivering long-term benefits to the community through improved public infrastructure."

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For further information or to set up an interview please contact Travis McNamara on 3503 5700 or 0427 215 143.

Background Report "The Affect of Global Economic Conditions on the Queensland Civil Construction Industry" attached.

Note to Editors: *Civil Contractors Federation, Queensland branch is a member-based body representative of small to medium civil engineering contractors in Queensland. We provide assistance and expertise in contractor development and industry issues. Through our 140-strong member base, we represent a workforce of more than 7000 people. Our members are involved in a variety of projects and activities including the development and maintenance of civil infrastructure such as roads, bridges, dams, commercial and housing land developments.*