

Culture change project >>

By Dr Keith Hampson, CEO for the Cooperative Research Centre for Construction Innovation

Relationship management, through contracting approaches such as partnering and alliancing, has been hailed as bringing a new era of cooperation between parties involved in major contracts, but this acclaim has been far from universal, and reports on the success of these approaches have been mixed.

In part, the mixed levels of acceptance and success can be attributed to differences in the organisation cultures of those involved in these projects, and the Cooperative Research Centre for *Construction Innovation* set up a project team (under the title "Facilitating a change in culture") to examine current attitudes and perceptions of relationship management, and pursue ways in which the organisational culture can be managed to ensure that the potential benefits of relationship management are realised.

The project team, led by Prof. Steve Rowlinson, a visiting professor at QUT, brings together the Queensland Department of Main Roads (QDMR), Queensland Department of Public Works (QDPW), the Brisbane City Council (BCC), Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), The University of Newcastle, the CSIRO and John Holland.

Better working relationships

One strand of this *Culture Change* Project involves assisting QDMR and QDPW develop changes in their organisation's culture and attitude that support relationship contracting. The key elements that these departments wish to implement are:

- the establishment of mutually agreed and understood objectives
- a process for resolving problems quickly and cooperatively
- a culture that fosters continuous, measurable improvement.



John Spathonis, Principal Manager (Research & Development) at the Capability and Delivery Division of QDMR, is involved with project delivery both internally in his role with QDMR and externally representing the Department in this project. QDMR holds an annual Technology Forum, and Professor Rowlinson has spoken at this, as well as smaller QDMR workshops promoting improved relationship contracting practice.

In outlining the benefits of the project to QDMR, Mr. Spathonis said, "Relationship contracts are not suited to every job, and not every relationship contract has been a success. However this project is helpful in understanding why some projects have succeeded and others have failed. The learnings and tools of the project will make an important contribution to the department

as it looks increasingly at non-price criteria in determining tenders."

A second strand assesses the culture, performance, innovation and flexibility of relationship contracting within the framework of the Brisbane Water Enviro Alliance (BCC and John Holland). John Holland CEO Bill Wild is a strong supporter of the project. Activities such as individual coaching, team-based exercises to build energy and rapport, and innovation-focused workshops, have been used to successfully build teamwork in the Alliance.

Terry Jones is Construction Manager for John Holland who are constructing the Brisbane Water Enviro Alliance, as well as being involved as an industry representative in the *Culture Change* Project. He has seen the draft toolkit developed through the

project and states that, "Fully developed and implemented, the toolkit will be of invaluable assistance to alliance contracting. It will assist in creating better organisational commitment to relationship contracting, and provide a more productive and satisfying working environment for participants."

A number of beneficial outcomes for industry will arise from this project, which is scheduled for completion in July 2005.

Outcomes include:

- a toolkit to assist organisations develop a culture that fosters relationship contracting
- a syllabus for a subject module within a Masters in Project Management program
- six one-day courses for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) within industry
- a report on best practice in relationship management, to be released after the conclusion of the project
- guidelines for relationship management in projects, tailored to the participants
- ongoing education and training programs.

In outlining the impact of the project, Professor Rowlinson said, "In some projects, formal relationship contracting is not needed, and the approach to relationship

contracting needs to be tailored to the participants. However, research shows that improved performance results from a relationship management approach (whether it be formalised or not), and the Culture Change Project is making a valuable contribution in providing the tools and training necessary to provide consistently good outcomes. One thing needing emphasis is that for cultural change initiatives to work, they must be supported throughout the organisation, in a diagonal slice from the labourer putting up the formwork right through to the project director." **BA**
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\$600 million precinct for ANU >>

The Australian National University and Baulderstone Hornibrook will jointly develop Canberra's 185,000m² City West precinct over the next 10 years. The \$600 million redevelopment will include a research and technology precinct, a new performing arts complex and student accommodation facilities among the first developments to proceed in the area.

There may also be an ANU College, offering year 11 and 12 students the opportunity to study selected advanced courses developed with the help of ANU staff, using the university's research facilities. More than 7500 jobs will be created in the construction phase of precinct development which will begin within months.

Construction of student accommodation for 450 will commence this year, and construction of the arts complex incorporating community group facilities, a new street theatre venue and arts themed shops and restaurants is likely to start in 2007. **BA**

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