

## BUILDING INNOVATIONS

# Constructing relationships for better project delivery



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RELATIONSHIP management is touted as introducing a fresh approach to facilitating cooperation between parties involved in major contracts. Not all are convinced of this though, and reports on the success of contracting approaches such as partnering and alliancing vary greatly.

Differences in the culture of organisations involved in construction projects largely explains this mixed response. The Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for *Construction Innovation* brought together a project team under the title "Project Delivery — Facilitating a Change in Culture" to look at current attitudes and perceptions of relationship management, and examine how an organisation's culture can be managed to realise the potential benefits of relationship management.

One aspect of the project led by Professor Steve Rowlinson, a visiting professor at Queensland University of Technology, involves assisting the Queensland departments of Main Roads (QDMR) and Public Works (QDPW) develop changes in their organisations' culture and attitude that support relationship contracting. This will involve implementing factors such as mutually agreed and understood objectives, a process for resolving problems quickly and cooperatively, and a culture that fosters continuous and measurable improvement. Collaborating partner QDMR has seen the benefits of the project through an improved understanding of why some projects have succeeded and others failed, especially as the Department is increasingly looking at non-price criteria in determining tenders.

Another aspect of the project assesses the culture, performance,

innovation and flexibility of relationship contracting within the Brisbane Water Enviro Alliance (Brisbane City Council and John Holland). The Alliance has successfully used activities such as individual coaching, team-based exercises and innovation-focused workshops to build teamwork.

Beneficial outcomes for industry from this project scheduled for completion in July 2005 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 the 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.

Partners collaborating on this project are John Holland, Queensland Department of Main Roads, Queensland Department of Public Works, the Brisbane City Council (BCC), Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), The University of Newcastle and CSIRO.

### About CRC CI

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