



Case study

Spotlight on sponsorship



As a business that is delivering some of Australia's largest and most complex infrastructure projects, we have a responsibility to provide **meaningful and rewarding career paths**, regardless of a person's gender. This is a responsibility we take very seriously. Our **Gender Equality Action Plan** sets out how we will achieve our ambitious gender parity targets, through **courageous change, honest conversations and building capability**.

One of the core initiatives in our Gender Equality Action Plan is the **sponsorship of emerging female leaders**. Research demonstrates that whilst men and women have access to professional development programmes, progression to leadership roles often depends on sponsorship, which women have a hard time accessing.

In FY24 we continued our investment in the Cultivate sponsorship programme. This is a sponsorship programme in Australia that is based on research to create cultural change, providing a structured approach to building **strategic alliances between women and Senior Leaders** to advance their leadership readiness.

Sponsorship is different to mentoring in that mentoring extends networks and provides people with a point of contact to seek advice or support from, whereas a sponsor is **someone in your organisation who actively advocates for you and opens doors to growth and promotion opportunities**.



Case study continued

Leigh Penney, Sustainability and Innovations Senior Manager in Australia said:

“When I was approached to join Laing O’Rourke’s Cultivate Programme I at first didn’t realise the impact this would have for me. My journey on Cultivate has been really supported by my sponsor(s), as I was lucky enough to have two – both with very different views that really helped me in various areas of my work life and career. I have also had the privilege of connecting with a broader network of Laing O’Rourke’s talented women, who have provided unique perspectives and inspiration to me over the past few months. Cultivate has helped me to see my career more strategically and has bolstered my confidence. I now feel I can advocate for my next career move and have an experienced and influential cohort of leaders behind me. I am extremely grateful to Laing O’Rourke for this amazing opportunity.”



Two cohorts have undertaken the Cultivate programme experience at Laing O’Rourke to date, with a commitment to deliver two cohort programmes each year.

A rigorous selection process resulted in six future female leaders being paired with a senior leader of the business to intentionally support and accelerate their career and development throughout FY24.

As a company, we celebrate diversity and inclusion, and we can and we will do more to drive more tangible change in our business, and our industry. By investing in this carefully curated sponsorship programme, we are not only investing in our people and their career progression but staking a clear claim to be an **employer of choice for women in the industry**.

“Working through the Cultivate Sponsorship programme with my sponsee has been a hugely fulfilling and insightful experience for us both. Seeing the impact of our conversations and the action of intentional sponsorship leading to positive outcomes highlights the importance of programmes like this.”

Thomas Mullens, General Manager - Operations