MASTER BUILDERS
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

MEDIA RELEASE

Graciete Ferreira awarded 2026 John Haskins AM Memorial Award for service to the construction industry

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canberra, ACT | Friday 13 November 2026

Graciete (Grace) Ferreira, former President of Master Builders ACT, was last night awarded the 2026 John Haskins AM Memorial Award for her dedicated service to the construction industry.

Announced at the Master Builders ACT Annual Dinner at the National Arboretum last night, Thursday 12 November, the John Haskins AM Memorial Award recognises individuals who have made an outstanding, sustained contribution to the ACT construction industry.

Grace's three-decade career, spanning business leadership, industry governance, workforce advocacy and community service, exemplifies the spirit of this award.

Anna Neelagama, CEO of Master Builders ACT, said Grace's appointment as the first female President of Master Builders ACT marked a turning point for the organisation and the wider industry.

‘Grace led this organisation through a period of significant change with wisdom, fairness and strength,’ Ms Neelagama said.

'As our first female President, serving from 2016 to 2021, she brought together a diverse membership and consistently found common ground where others saw division.

'She has always put the interests of the industry ahead of any faction.’

‘Grace has also been a tireless advocate for the people of our industry, championing safer workplaces, better training, and for genuine pathways for women and migrant workers into construction. This award is richly deserved.’

END

Background

Grace arrived in Australia from Portugal in 1987 and, with her family, co-founded Pacific Formwork in 1998 as a small Canberra formwork operation. Under her direction, the business has grown into one of Canberra's leading formwork contractors, employing more than 150 staff and contractors, with yards and fabrication facilities in Canberra, Albury and Newcastle, and a precast subsidiary, Precast Projects.

Her professional excellence is reflected in the business's reputation for safety and quality, built on investment in modern equipment, world-class training and systems, and a stable, directly-hired workforce. That commitment recently saw Pacific Formwork granted an ACT workers' compensation self-insurance licence, an achievement attained by only two Australian construction contractors.

Grace's voluntary contribution to the industry spans close to twenty years, including:

- Master Builders ACT Executive Council member since 2007
- Chair, Suppliers and Subcontractors Council (2010–2016)
- President, Master Builders ACT (2016–2021) - the first woman to hold the office
- Master Builders Australia National Board member since 2019 - the first female non-executive director in the organisation's 130-year history
- ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority board (2016–2024)
- ACT Regional Building & Construction Industry Training Council member
- Five years on the advisory board of the ACT Government's Default Insurance Fund

She is also an ambassador for Women Building Australia and represented the Australian construction sector at international skilled-migration forums, including Jobs Expo Galway in 2024.

Grace serves as a Non-Executive Director of PCYC Canberra, President of the Canberra Portuguese Association, and since December 2023, a member of the Portuguese Diaspora Council. Through Pacific Formwork, she has long sponsored local sporting teams and community groups, including the Monaro Panthers.

As a migrant who built a business from the ground up, Grace has become a visible advocate for women and people from migrant and non-English-speaking backgrounds entering the industry - including speaking publicly on SBS about migrant careers in construction.

Her contribution has previously been recognised with the NAWIC (ACT) Crystal Vision Award and the Order of Merit Gold Medal awarded by the Portuguese Government.

Media enquiries:

Tara Nichols | Communications & Marketing Manager
tnichols@mba.org.au | 0430 026 612

Together, we build better.