Project Management Institute. Sydney, Australia

25 YEARS

The Critical Path

April 2023

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Editor's Note

Himadri Chowdhury

I open today by remembering the bravery and sacrifice of our fallen heroes. Today we mark 108 years since Gallipoli with Dawn Services and parades across the country, and celebrate what has been an enduring symbol of military sacrifice. Lest we forget.

Undoubtedly, April is the busiest month, opening with Easter, moving on to school holidays and ending with ANZAC day and subsequent reopening of schools. A lot of activities are packed in these 30 days, friends, family, relatives, parties, get-togethers, picnics and what not, so it's actually almost a relief when things return to normal and you get stuck in the rush-hour traffic once more trying to make it to another workday.

We have a new government at the helm this month, and a lot of familiar faces at the Parliament house have been replaced with new ones. Chris Minns and his team have a lot on their plate, considering the election promises they need to live up to and the review of previous policies they have announced. There would surely be quite a few changes going forward, and we can hope that they are positive like the toll-relief and can take the sting out of the rising cost of living. Only time will tell how successful they were, but we wish Mr Minns and his team all the very best. Governing a state is somewhat like managing a very complex program, and we project managers know how difficult, frustrating and yet exciting that can be.

There were a few causes for concern this month, with some staggering statistics on the dollar-value of online scams affecting Aussies, and few new data breaches affecting substantial number of people. With so much of our data now shared voluntarily with several corporations, it seems our potential of exposure to data breaches is increasing exponentially every day. And, sadly, protection is not increasing in the same speed as the breaches themselves. Being vigilant and aware is the only way to protect oneself, though not fully.

Defence Strategic Review or DSR, those who do not know what that is, we are talking about a study commissioned by the Albanese-government to set "the agenda for ambitious, but necessary, reform to Defence's posture and structure". The public version of the DSR was released on 24 April, along with the Government's response to the Review, and the National Defence Statement 2023. Why is this important? It's important as it sets the stage for key defence projects that would be prioritised in the next 10 years. AUKUS deal and submarines are getting a lot of press, but there are several strategic initiatives that are being looked at, which, in turn, would be a big boost to the defence industry. We are not predicting a jobs boom, but project managers would likely benefit from the new acquisitions.

Closer home, we just completed our Board meeting for April and refined our strategic priorities for the year. We also made the decision to hold the Annual General Meeting on 22 June 2023. Keep your calendars open because we have a very special speaker on

that day. We have lined up some interesting events with great speakers in the next few days, follow our LinkedIn posts and email reminders to register, also check the website. Note that Volunteer Day is coming up in mid-May – expect to receive an announcement from our Volunteering Director soon.

In this month's Critical Path, Dr Elissa Farrow, in a timely article, talks about the pros and cons of artificial intelligence in project management. Ibrahim Dani refers to the PMI Pulse of the Profession 2023 and focuses on Power Skills that differentiate a leader from a manager. Jess Tayel explains how project's definition, scope, and name significantly impacts its design, outcome, impact, and level of stakeholder engagement.

Louis Taborda answers a very interesting question on project chaos and how to end them. In the first part of his two part-series, Leo Coco talks about comfort and why it stops us from achieving what we need to. Last but not the least, Steve Tompkins lists the different ways to score an A+ in a job interview.

We are curating additional content from the next edition onwards, including voice of members. If you want to be featured, reach out to me at the email IDs below.

We would love for you to contribute to the future issues of our newsletter. Please connect with us at *newsletter@pmisydney.org* or *marketing@pmisydney.org*.

Best,

Himadri Sekhar Chowdhury

Editor, The Critical Path

The pros and cons of artificial intelligence for PMOs

Dr Elissa Farrow

The past year has seen continued uptake of technologies and tools to improve the effectiveness of project management and agile delivery. An expert on the implications of artificial intelligence on organisations of the future, consultant and PM-Partners facilitator ***Dr Elissa Farrow*** *explores how greater investment in AI will influence project delivery and PMO functions.*

Dr Elissa Farrow

Consultant and PM-Partners Facilitator

Artificial intelligence (AI) and other innovative auto-generative systems were a key theme at this January's Dubai International Project Management Forum. Over the summer break we also saw ChatGPT (or Generative Pre-Trained Transformer) making headlines across the world. A chatbot released by OpenAI in November 2022, ChatGPT is fueled by large volumes of data and language processing algorithms that will shake up many industries and sectors previously in the slow lane or at the fringe of AI.

Already, there's no doubt that machine intelligence combined with the power of 5G networks is having a significant effect on organisations and the way staff, leaders, community members, and even other AI, interact with each other. But what does all this mean for project delivery – what specific impacts should we anticipate over the course of 2023 and into the future?

AI and the PMO

According to Spyros Makridakis in his paper The Forthcoming Artificial Intelligence (AI) Revolution: Its Impact on Society and Firms: "The successful firms during the AI revolution will focus on evaluating and exploiting AI technologies to gain the most out of their implementation in all aspects of the firm".

This consideration of adding value is very relevant within the day-to-day functioning of the portfolio, programme and project management office (PMO). One of the PMO's primary roles is to analyse data in order to create decision-ready insights that target issue management, prioritisation and governance attention.

Particularly in large organisations, the volume of ever-changing data PMOs are required to aggregate can be huge. It's also expansive in breadth, relating to time, cost, resources, change impact, benefit, risk, governance, quality – to name a few. As the size of the complexity of portfolio's grow, the value proposition to using intelligent machines to navigate and make meaning from the 'big data' becomes a necessary reality.

In the 2020 Project Management Survey from AIPM and KPMG, only 10 percent of respondents indicated they use AI tools to support project delivery, with a further eight per cent planning to adopt. However, with the growing use of AI agents such as ChatGPT providing the ability to summarise larger texts into key points, among other time-saving features, this will no doubt change.

The implications of using AI

Like any change to enterprise and solution architecture, organisations need to determine how modern technologies can be of assistance.

As I found in my research (Farrow, 2022), there are a number of implications of AI in organisational settings and in the project management context (as temporary organisations) – and we should expect both positive and negative effects, including:

Pros

With these fundamentals in mind, achieving progress comes down to getting a few key changes across the line. Regardless of how we work, we need:

- Faster processing of large data sets to enable decision making
- Automation of administrative or repetitive tasks (i.e. report generation, schedule scenario testing)
- More time for project managers to spend on building meaningful human connections with team members and customers
- Better analysis of the risk and estimate uncertainty
- An extra 'brain' or first responder in change (for example, chatbot Q&A or portfolio analyst)
- AI-enabled products to support workplace learning
- 24/7 operation (AI does not need rest, sick leave or holidays).

Cons

- Poor or unclean data inputs, leading to misleading results
- Undetected bias encoded in algorithms by developers (e.g. ChatGPT accesses available published explicit data and not the tacit knowledge)
- Risk of over-reliance and trust without adequate assurance

- Environmental and energy impacts of AI production and use
- Reduction in sense of fulfilment and purpose for displaced team members
- Harder for junior PMs to get experience when entry-level functions are being automated
- AI cannot replace human nuanced moral, ethical or 'grey' thinking (yet).

Taking a considered approach

It's important to carefully weigh the costs and benefits of using AI in PMO contexts. By being mindful of these issues, we can ensure that the development and use of AI is responsible, governed and beneficial for the organisation and broader society.

As I highlight in my research (Farrow, 2022), leaders will need to recognise the challenges and opportunities and be able to adequately address people's fear of the future, namely through culture and an approach to leadership that guides people through this transition. One of the best ways to start exploring this space is by trying out accessible AI such as ChatGPT and making judgement for yourself.

Final decisions will need to be made by humans for the foreseeable future. But what is here now, and rapidly evolving, is that AI will be of assistance in supporting successful PMO and delivery decision making. The scenario of an AI project manager replacing 100 per cent of the role will not occur any time soon, but we may see an AI portfolio analyst, communication agent or administrator, and we will certainly have AI as an extra 'set of eyes and insights' around the governance table.

Keen to keep pace with the evolving project management domain? Check out the full version of this article and consider updating your delivery skills. Our PMI Agile Certified Practitioner course is a good next step for those working in an agile environment, providing the necessary preparation to obtain the globally recognised Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP®). Contact us for more information or call 1300 70 13 14 today.

Note: PMI members qualify for a 20% discount on PM-Partners courses – simply quote code PMI20 when booking.

Jobs Guide: You're on Mute!
Steve Tompkins

It's been a couple of years since I have presented or wrote on what hiring managers were exploring when interviewing candidates to manage their projects. It was a different market then – in fact, it was pre-COVID and a very different world. Working from home any more than an ad-hoc basis was a dream for most, and most interviews were face-to-face. In fact, I used to advise against phone or Teams interviews where possible as it was often a precursor to the actual interview: a face-to-face interview. Remote interviews merely added an extra layer and barrier to being hired.

Now things have moved on and not only has the market got used to running their interview process remotely, hiring managers are now comfortable enough in their questioning and process to make hiring decisions without meeting candidates face-to-face. I have recently just placed a Project Manager and neither party has met face-to-face yet.

Apart from the medium, how has this changed the process? When interviews first shifted to remote (full-time and out of necessity), the questions, technical emphasis, and weighing of behavioural and situational questioning didn't move at first. In short, nothing much changed but it was a bit hit-and-miss for both the interviewer and the interviewee, and engagement and depth suffered. The experience felt more transactional.

The technical questions and emphasis still haven't changed drastically. Hiring managers are still assessing risk management, cost management, planning and forecasting (project roadmap experience), and looking for examples around delivery experience. The bigger changes in remote interviewing in the last few years have been where the interviewer assesses soft skills.

Overall, there is a reduction of small talk, so "How was your trip in?", is a moot point. This means from the start the candidate has an even harder job and less time in which to build rapport with the interviewer(s).

We all lose some of our communication effectiveness through video / non-face-to-face modes and this holds true throughout the interview. However, in the post-COVID world of managing teams remotely or in hybrid models this is obviously an important skill to learn.

Steve Tompkins has over 20 years' experience in the Recruitment Industry in Sydney and the UK, nearly a decade of which was spent in leadership positions. He is the NSW Government Client Relationship Manager for Talent International in Sydney and has enjoyed working closely with the PMI for the last decade. His main area of specialisation in recruitment is in sourcing, delivery and support of Project Managers, delivery teams and Project resources.

There has been an increased emphasis in the last year by managers hiring remotely on the assessment of a candidates critical thinking ability. Critical thinking is used daily in project management to evaluate data and information to make judgments during the planning stage and use that knowledge as project conditions change.

Other “in vogue” soft skills assessed are still leadership ability, time management, and adaptability. I would recommend for anyone being interviewed remotely that they have strong examples of each. Your ability to polish these answers and “tell stories”, as opposed to “give answers”, will have a great impact on your success rate when being interviewed this way and help compensate some of the communication impact lost through this medium.

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Some other examples of more common questions hiring managers are asking on remote interviews recently are:

- What method do you use to rank the tasks in a project?
- What is the worst / most difficult project you have worked on?
- What’s some of the things you have employed to deal with a challenging vendor / stakeholder?
- How can you tell if a project is in danger of blowing over budget / time, etc.?
- What should you do if the project is not progressing according to plan?
- What traits and skills do you believe are necessary for a project manager?

How else can you increase your chances of success?

Be prepared
This is true of both in-person and video interviews: preparation is key. Look into the company (using websites like LinkedIn and Glassdoor) and the person/people you'll be speaking to. Spend some time reading through the job description and matching it to your CV to see which of your skills and past successes best match the role. Finally, make sure you prepare answers to some of the most common questions interviewers regularly ask.

Think of your tech
With video interviews, the main issues you might have to deal with will be technical. So, before you're due to start, make sure to do a tech test; do you have a stable internet connection; are your microphone and camera working? We normally advise to use a laptop or desktop computer, however, if your phone has the capacity to handle a long video chat, you may be okay to use it.

No distractions, please
Now that your tech is good to go, it's time to think about your environment. Avoid doing video interviews at coffee shops, libraries, and other public places, where you'll be bombarded with distracting noises and movement. Instead, stay at home and choose a quiet, well-lit room with enough space to set up your equipment. If you live with family or friends, make sure they know your interview is taking place so they can remember to be quiet.

First impressions matter
While you may not be meeting the interviewer in person, your appearance and the way you present yourself will still be taken into consideration. So, when you're setting up and getting ready, try to imagine you're doing a face-to-face interview and pick your clothes accordingly. You should also pay attention to your background and try to keep it as mess-free as possible - a white or light-coloured wall will be best.

Final thoughts
It's not just the hiring manager that hasn't met you – you haven't met the hiring manager as well, so please ensure you cover all your (prepared) questions. If the opportunity is through a reputable agency your consultant will be happy to fill in any blanks for you before you commit.

It's rare that a PM role will be fully remote now with most employers offering (and candidates asking for) a hybrid model. If it is fully remote, some good questions to ask yourself (and the hiring manager), are around access to key stakeholders and SMEs. Have you thought how you will keep the team motivated while working fully remotely? Are they all fully remote? How will this impact your style? If it is hybrid – how long is the commute? Is it near public transport? Are you clear on the expectations? Are the team clear on their expectations?

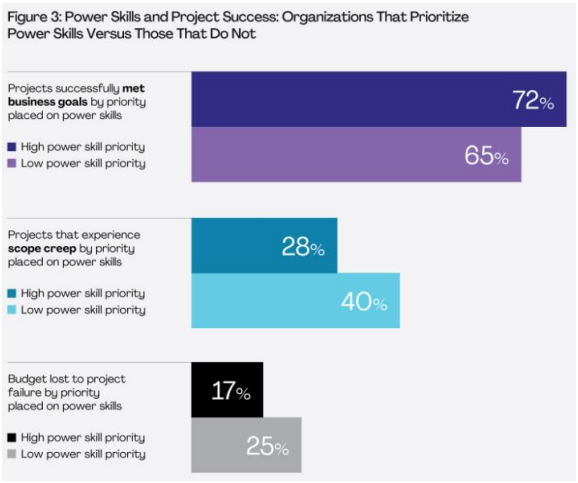
And of course – make sure you are not "on mute".

Beyond Project Management
Ibrahim Dani

Stop Managing – Start Leading

For many years, studies have repeatedly shown that the percentage of projects failing is unacceptably high. Project Management standards, frameworks, and methodologies have been updated continuously, with promises to increase the project success rates. However, studies have failed to prove this. No doubt that updated frameworks and new ways of working are an important step in the direction of improving project success, but apparently it is not enough.

The latest PMI Pulse of the Profession 2023 (https://www.pmi.org/learning/thought-leadership/pulse/power-skills-redefining-project-success) puts forward a new formula to increase project success: Power Skills. The report titled "Power Skills, Redefining Project Success" states that "power skills top the list of the most important capabilities project managers need".



Extract from the Pulse of the Profession 2023

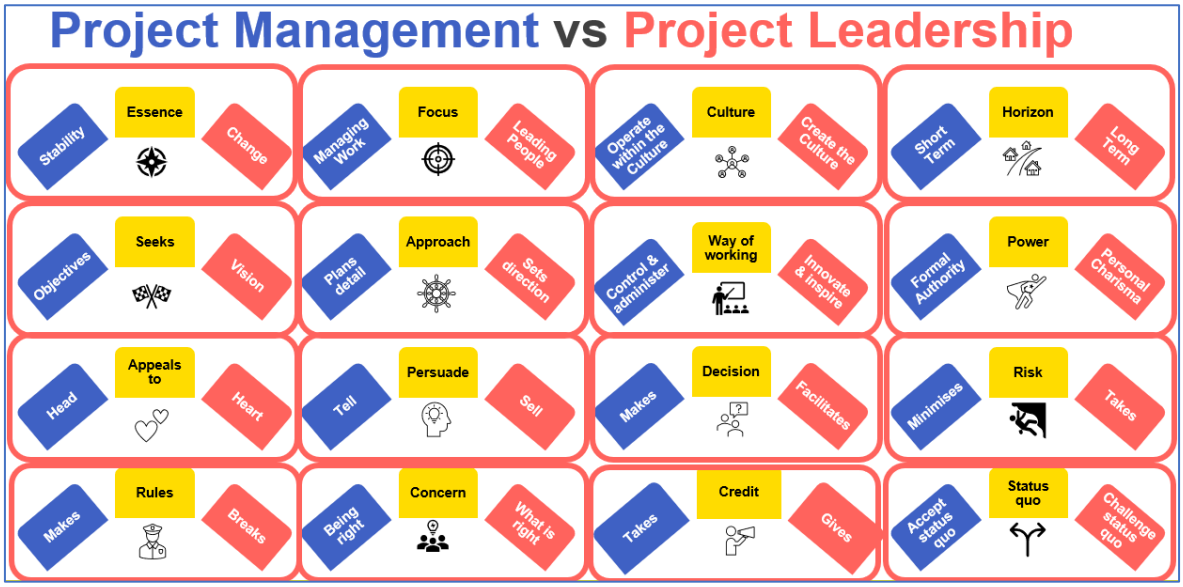
Studies reported in the Pulse of the Profession 2023 compared projects in organisations that prioritise Power Skills against projects in organisations that do not prioritise power skills. The results clearly proved that organisations that prioritise Power Skills:

- experience higher rate of achieving project business goals,
- have less scope creep, and
- undergo less wasted budget of failed projects

than those in the organisations that do not prioritise these skills.

Ibrahim Dani is an accomplished business leader with extensive experience in managing programs and leading people. Ibrahim had a colourful career journey including speaking at PMI EMEA Congress and training aspiring Project Managers. He is an advocate for excellence, a trusted adviser, and a thought leader in project delivery and related human capital management.

It is about time to stop managing and start leading. It is important to learn and apply the ways of working (managing projects), but it is more important to apply the "right" ways of working that fits the specific project, and that requires leadership skills.



We need to change our mindset and acknowledge that technical skills are not enough to deliver successful projects. Power Skills, namely leadership skills, is the cornerstone to project success.

The accompanying infographic paints a picture about some differences between management and leadership, to help you adjust your efforts:

- The purpose of management is to achieve stability. In an increasingly changing world, we should embrace 'change' as a constant and shift our essence towards continuous change.
- Projects are done by people. Therefore, the focus of the Project Manager should be to 'lead' people rather than manage tasks.
- Projects have a tendency to create their own culture. While the projects are impacted by the organisational culture, you do have the opportunity to create a unique project culture to ensure project success.
- Keep an eye on the long term goals: successful Project Managers seek a 'vision' rather than just short term objectives.
- Project Managers should set a clear direction while entrusting their people to plan the details.
- Project Managers should move away from 'by-the-book' control and innovate 'ways of working' to inspire their people to do better.
- Appeal to the hearts of your people, not only their heads. This will help you influence them by selling them the ideas, rather than telling them what to do.
- Don't be afraid to take calculated risks, and help your people make the decisions rather than telling them what to do.
- Successful Project Managers usually challenge the status quo, and give credit to their people rather than taking the credit for themselves.

Stop Managing and Start Leading: advocate a clear purpose and vision, do what you say and say what you do, promote creativity, challenge the status quo, and create a contagious culture of positivity and can-do.

Projects and Transformations

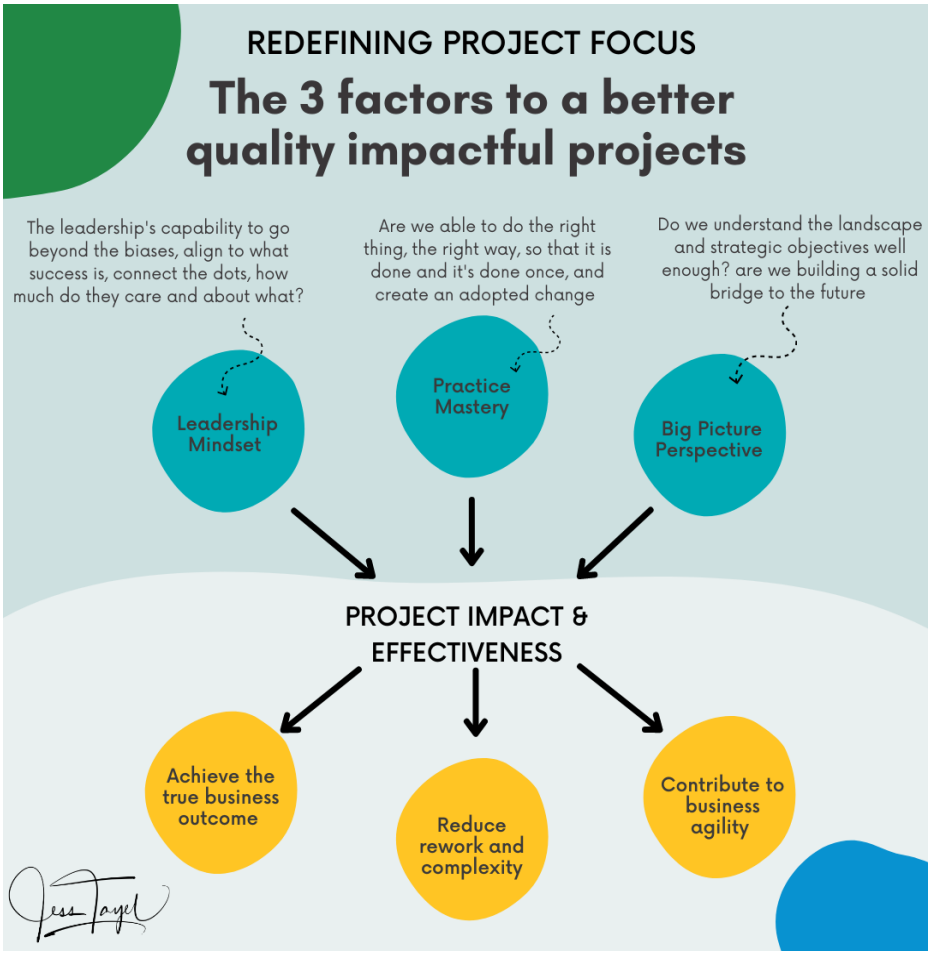
Jess Tayel

The Path to Meaningful Projects: Rethinking Project Outcomes

Introduction

As professionals and leaders in project management, we constantly strive to deliver successful projects that drive meaningful change within organisations. However, one key aspect often overlooked is the way we frame and think about our projects. How a project is defined, scoped, and named significantly impacts its design, outcome, impact, and level of stakeholder engagement.

In this article, I would like to share and discuss how shifting the focus from tools to outcomes can make a project more meaningful and effective. Moreover, it will explore insights, best practices, and pitfalls related to this approach.



Jess Tayel is a global thought leader in Business transformation, an executive coach and mentor. Her mission is to elevate the transformation practice and enable leaders to be the best version of themselves. Jess is also the founder of the People of Transformation & Change Community, a global community for leaders and professionals in change, transformation, program management and experience design.

Redefining Project Focus:
How perspectives can shift project focus

Over the past 2 decades, my quest has been to deliver better change and transformation programs using an integrated and holistic approach that delivers the outcome. In that journey, I came to realise that 3 things deeply impact the quality of projects

- The leadership mindset
- The depth and breadth of the practice mastery
- The ability to see the bigger picture and bring invaluable perspective.

The Three Versions

Let's consider an example of a project that is centred around automation. There are 3 ways we can label and design this project. Let's consider these 3 versions.
The project's first version, labelled "Reporting Automation," focuses on automating a set of manual reporting processes. By labelling the project this way, the focus becomes solely on the tool (automation). As a result, the project will draw a specific talent, budget, and timeline based on this singular aspect.

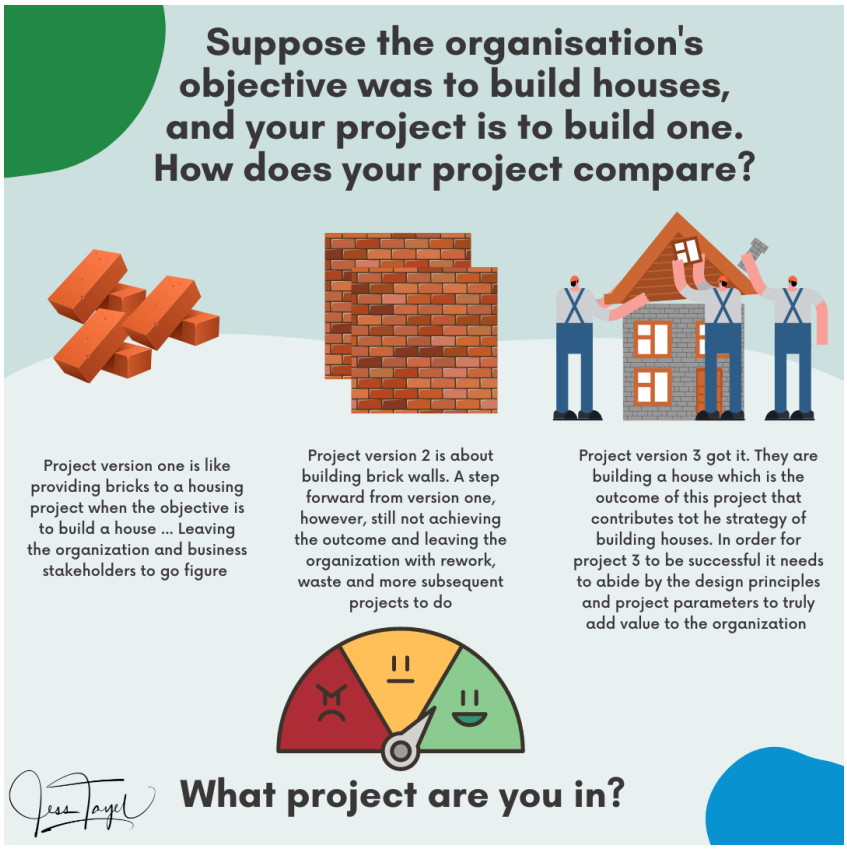
Now, imagine two alternative versions of the same project. The second version is a project labelled "Improve data governance practices". This version will draw on different talents, scope, and budget and encourage a different way of thinking.

The third version is a project labelled "Enable real-time decision-making for Trading" (Trading is the function's name; it can be anything). This version will lead to deeper conversations, a more extensive scope and attract a different calibre.

All three versions have automation at their core, but the projects are designed differently, with varying outcomes, impacts, structures, timelines, budgets, and calibre

What business are you in?

Drawing from the 3 different versions, I would like to use the analogy of building a house to help bring this to life in the context of the organisation that wants to execute its strategy and improve its market positioning.



Conclusion

Redefining how we think about projects can significantly impact their success and alignment with organisational transformation programs. By focusing on the desired outcomes and engaging stakeholders in deeper conversations, projects can be designed to drive meaningful change and deliver lasting value. As project management professionals and leaders, we are responsible for continually evolving our approach to project thinking, ensuring we deliver projects that truly make a difference.

Coco's Corner

Leo Coco

The Discomfort Zone – Part 1 - Our Relationship with Comfort

As I have GROWN through my own life, it has become obvious that we gravitate naturally towards being comfortable. For this reason, it's important to acknowledge what role COMFORT plays in our lives and also how it could be the reason WHY you are where you ARE at the moment.

"Comfort" - Imagine what your life would be like if you could convince yourself to enjoy a little Discomfort every now and again too.

We like things to stay the same, so we gravitate toward routine. Days without surprises are easily managed, but few and far between sometimes when working with projects, right? 😊

Comfort is considered the ultimate goal of a life well spent.

BUT it's also the greatest prison cell you'll ever devise for yourself.

Comfort is all about staying safe. It is all about things being predictable and having a life without demands. Comfort can be a very good thing – unless you want to grow and succeed in life. Comfort keeps us where we are, giving us no reason to challenge ourselves, learn new things, or discover what we're REALLY capable of doing.

So, what is the "Comfort Zone":

"The comfort zone is a behavioral state within which a person operates in an anxiety-neutral condition, using a limited set of behaviors to deliver a steady level of performance, usually without a sense of risk."

The phrase 'anxiety neutral.' This means that a person in their comfort zone was neither worried nor stressed. When you are in the 'comfort zone,' you know precisely where you are, what's expected of you, and how to accomplish what you need to do. There are no threats or surprises, nor are there unexpected challenges on the horizon. It is, in short, a **comfortable** place to be.

A comfort zone has no set parameters. What defines your comfort zone is not the same comfort zone your neighbor, co-worker, or spouse enjoys.

Project Management Authority, Trainer, Entrepreneur and Speaker, there are many facets to Leo Coco, our PMISC Director. He has seen it all – from fast-paced corporate environments, to public enterprises touching millions. Decades of experience have given him an almost uncanny ability to home in on the latest trends in the market and predict changes that are coming. In this column, Leo gives our readers a ringside view of how the world of Project Management is changing around us.

This happens in part because we all react differently to different situations. One person might feel comfortable with a certain number of surprises in their day. Another person might consider every surprise a threat to their well-being and define their comfort zone as a day with absolutely no surprises.

More commonly, we tend to define a comfort zone by what **challenges** us. To an extrovert, a large party might feel like walking into their comfort zone. To an introvert, they might not know how large of a gathering will challenge their comfort zone, but they'll certainly know when they've crossed it.

Because the comfort zone is a mental state, it's probably easier to figure out your personal comfort zone by how you feel under certain circumstances. One thing is for sure though, is that when you reach your comfort zone, you quite naturally want to stay there.

Comfort Zones aren't bad things. In fact, there's quite a lot of reasons to recommend them. Some of the benefits of the Comfort Zone are:

You Know What's Expected

Being able to get through your day without a lot of uncertainty and doubt reduces a great deal of stress. There are no surprises in the Comfort Zone.

You Have Time to Learn New Things

It's impossible to better yourself when you're caught up in a whirlwind. This means that being in the Comfort Zone is the ideal time to pick up a new skill, research new information, or even finish off a degree or gain a certification, better preparing yourself for when you're next ready to challenge yourself.

Comfort Zones Give Room for Daydreams

Where do goals come from? We create them when we're calm and relaxed. Comfort Zones are a great place to imagine a better future and create new goals for ourselves. It's here where your best planning happens.

You Give Your Body a Break

Sometimes when we're rushed, we don't always do what's best for ourselves. Comfort Zones give you a chance to catch your breath, catch a proper meal and make up on some sleep. Just being relaxed does wonders for your nervous system, reducing anxiety or stress.

You Have Time for a Social Life

When rushed, we don't always take time for our relationships. The Comfort Zone allows us to fully enjoy being around those we love without feeling like we have to rush through the interaction. Imagine having a conversation without distractions, focusing your full attention on the other person.

You Regain a Measure of Control

Being in the Comfort Zone gives you a sense of having mastered whatever challenge you previously faced. You're back at the helm, fully in charge of your life. This is something we all need once in a while.

Everything Seems Easier

In short, with a clear understanding of expectations, no real challenges, and nothing to upset what you're doing, your daily life is stripped down to one of simplicity. There are no complications where there's no change.

As you can see, it's not only desirable to be within your Comfort Zone, it's absolutely necessary to visit this ZONE now and again. We all need space to find ourselves again, to rest and recharge. Without time spent in your Comfort Zone, you will eventually burn out, mentally and physically.

So how does the Comfort Zone hold us back?

There is a danger to Comfort Zones. As with anything good for you, it's possible to overindulge, creating too much of a **good thing**.

Think about the last time you worked out at the gym and took things too far. It wasn't fun gasping for breath and feeling like you'd just been hit by a truck and the next day when your muscles were aching, and you struggled to move without it feeling like your muscles were being torn off the bone. You know what, it's even possible to make yourself sick drinking too much water, something we all need more of (especially given that 75% of people are dehydrated at any given moment).

It's easy to **overdo** things and it's also easy to become too **comfortable**, to the point where the Comfort Zone could be doing more harm than good.

So how can you tell when you've gone too far and comfort has become your default go to?

Life Feels Boring or Even Stagnant

There are no surprises anymore, and you've fallen into a routine where you're doing the same old thing, day in and day out. At first, it was comforting. Now you're just slogging through the day feeling like you're not making progress or doing anything worthwhile. There's no more challenge, and life is feeling dull.

You're Not Applying What You've Learned

It's so easy to get caught up in research and learning new things. There's so much to discover in the world! But what are you doing with all this information? If you've reached the point of learning just to learn new things, that's okay. It's good to be excited about education. The danger lies in using education as a means of procrastination. Are you putting off-putting this new knowledge from actually working for you? This would be like reading a hundred books on how to write a book without ever trying to write a book

yourself. This isn't just a waste of your education. You're holding yourself back, keeping yourself from finding out what you can do by applying the knowledge you've gained. I have fallen into this trap myself.

You're Dreaming but Not Doing

It's fun to plan and make lists, blueprints, and goals for everything you want to do with your life, but this kind of planning creates nothing positive for you if you're never taking action to reach those goals. You've been in the comfort zone too long if you're an "all idea and no action" type of person. At some point, you absolutely have to get out and DO.

You've Been on a Break for a Really Long Time

The life of leisure sounds good, but it does begin to grow old fairly quickly. Sure, your body loves it when you're taking proper care of yourself, but too much lazing around can start doing you more harm than good. Muscles that aren't put to work tend to decondition. This goes for mental acuity as well as physical prowess. If you take too much time off, you'll have a harder time making decisions. Nor will you have the stamina to face physical challenges ahead. For the best use of the Comfort Zone, get your rest and recharge. Then take action once you've restored your energy.

You've Lost Your Flexibility

It can feel good to have everything under control. But what happens if something unexpected comes up? If you're used to things being a certain way, you'll find it's suddenly a lot harder to be flexible in accepting sudden change or to even deal with a crisis if it arises. You simply lose your knack for managing uncertain conditions and immediately jump to a stress response when things are outside your control.

You're Being Held Back

Finally, the Comfort Zone is perfect to conform to the status quo, but it doesn't help you move forward in your career or in achieving your goals. You can't possibly win the day when you're sitting still, only acting reactively to challenges, rather than getting out and hunting down new paths to success, facing your future on your own terms.

What's even worse? If you stay too long in your Comfort Zone, it'll start to shrink YOU down until you find yourself doing less and less. How, do you ask? Well, things that were on the border between being comfortable and uncomfortable will eventually become uncomfortable themselves.

Now consider this: if you stay too long in one comfort zone, you'll never discover another. What if you're missing out on a better comfort zone by not striving through to the next level? Imagine where you could be next!

How to get there? This is where the Discomfort Zone comes in.

Wait for my follow-up article in the May 2023 PMISC Newsletter as I provide the next element of "The Discomfort Zone – Part 2 – Are you being propelled forward", where I explain what the Discomfort Zone is and we find out how you could be using DISCOMFORT to propel you towards your goals.

Remember, you get back what you put into things, so you know your efforts will always pay off.

Welcome to the beginnings of understanding "**The Discomfort Zone**".

To Your Success!

Simple Answer to Project Chaos – No!

Louis Taborda

Why is it that simple project management (PM) concepts can be difficult to apply in the real-world?

I remember my early, well-meaning attempts to apply PM best practices early in my career – you know, having a plan, working to it and updating it regularly - those basic things we are taught are part of PM. Yet, performing these basic actions proved to be quite challenging in practice.

The real-world project environment was far more complex and chaotic than I imagined. I soon found that if I wanted to do the right thing about running the project, then I pretty much had to do it in my own time because most of the day was taken up in meetings and sundry activities that left no time for PM basics. I remember my boss looking suspiciously at my project plan as if it was a distraction, taking time away from simply getting the job done. Why the need for all this theoretical planning? Why wasn't I just getting on with the work at hand?

It can be disenchanting to work in environments, where attempting to maintain a plan marked you as the odd-one-out and your peers viewed you as somewhat naïve because everyone else communicated using a slide deck.

But the modern workplace is all about results and in fairness, planning is problematic when the ground is shifting underfoot. There are usually so many things going on at the same time – let's call that having a dynamic environment – and a project manager must work feverishly to deliver value for their sponsors amidst the confusion.

Does this sound familiar? Or was my professional experience an aberration?

Businesses looking to deliver ambitious programs give rise to high-intensity environments where it can be difficult to find the time to apply traditional PM disciplines. It can make PMs somewhat cynical and disenchanted. But have Agile approaches made a significant difference or is it a systemic problem that is a consequence of continual and incessant change? After all, PM is the discipline that really coordinates other business resources who actually have to do the work and in most organisations it is easier to increase the number of (contract) PMs, than it is to increase the skilled resources and business subject-matter experts that are needed to execute on the projects.

Dr Louis Taborda is a project professional and passionate educator at the School of Project Management, University of Sydney. He is also founder of Projectize.Me a start-up Social Enterprise. All the views expressed here are his own.

My PhD thesis looked at the possibility that the problem does not lie at the project level but is rather a result of the swirl of multiple projects sweeping through the enterprise. While the ultimate driver of change is our fast-paced business environment, at some point all the consequential project deliverables have to be integrated and absorbed into the new business-as-usual. The solution requires a recognition of the organisational constraints and a whole other level of project governance and oversight that is mostly outside the (current) limits of our discipline. No amount of project, program (or programme) and portfolio management – not even the most agile and effective Project Management Office can address the chaos. Not until the day they have the power to say: No! We cannot initiate another project at this time!

Chapter News – April 2023

Mentoring Returns in 2023!

Dear valued PMISC members,

We are thrilled to announce that our mentoring program for 2023 is recommencing, and we can't wait to see what exciting opportunities this year will bring.

To kick off the program, we are hosting a special event on April 28th. This event will feature speeches from the directors of the Sydney chapter, who will share their experiences and insights on the importance of mentoring and the benefits it can bring to both mentors and mentees.

In addition, we are also excited to offer a networking event, which will provide a valuable opportunity for our members to connect, share ideas, and build relationships with one another.

We believe that mentoring is a powerful tool for personal and professional growth, and we are committed to supporting our members in every way possible. Whether you are a seasoned mentor or just starting your mentoring journey, we encourage you to join us for this exciting event.

So mark your calendars and save the date - April 28th is going to be an incredible day of learning, networking, and growth.

We look forward to seeing you there!

PMISC Event April 27 - Putting purpose back into innovation

PMI Sydney Chapter is pleased to host Michael Scheelhardt, a keynote speaker, coach and facilitator who has successfully supported teams to think differently about designing project experiences that delivers client innovation with impact for mutual growth.

Innovation is used in many contexts, however, how can we define it with purpose in comparison to an invention?

This session will provide a framework to define and apply innovation strategies to solve customer problems and looks at innovation from the perspective of delivering a better experience.

Register: https://pmisydney.org/events/evening-events/pmisc-27th-april-2023-putting-purpose-back-into-innovation

Date: Thursday 27th April 2023

Arrive: 6 PM

Meeting: 6:30 PM to 8 PM

Depart: 9 PM

Venue : Castlereagh Boutique Hotel

Chapter News – April 2023

PMISC Event May 9 - Taming an Uncertain Future

PMI Sydney Chapter is pleased to host Mal Anderson, a speaker, author and workshop facilitator. He maps success for people and organisations through adaptive futures, change transformation, collaboration and trust.

Mal talks about How We Adapt in a World of Increasing Complexity & Disruption. Exactly how fast is the world changing? With the pandemic it really hit us that change is all around, we're all impacted and we have to roll with it Resistance is Useless!

Markets are changing, disruption is normal, staff turnover is volatile, customer preference in constant flux. What can we rely on? What can we do to stay in control?

Register: https://pmisydney.org/events/evening-events/pmisc-9th-of-may-2023-taming-an-uncertain-future

Date: Tuesday 9th May 2023

Arrive: 6 PM

Meeting: 6:30 PM to 8 PM

Depart: 9 PM

Venue : TBC

Chapter News – April 2023

Project Management Institute.

THE MORE YOU GIVE, THE MORE YOU'LL GET.

VOLUNTEER WITH PMI.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN GANTT CHARTS AND ROLLING WAVE PLANNING.

It's about people. Teamwork. Collaboration. Leadership. Motivation.

And at PMI, PEOPLE ARE GENEROUS WITH THEIR TIME, TALENT and EXPERIENCE.

Did you know that most of PMI's work is done by volunteers?

PMI was founded by volunteers – people who wanted to enhance the profession of project management, share new ideas, and reap the benefits of expanding connections and career advancement opportunities.

By sharing their time, experience and expertise, PMI volunteers:

- Develop leadership and business skills by serving on our chapter board of directors or by taking part in local events and activities
- Benefit from a wide variety of educational, networking, and career-advancing opportunities
- Build professional networks and benefit from relationships with other project managers

Join the thousands of volunteers serving 300+ chapters worldwide.

Through continued, active involvement in the profession, volunteers sharpen their existing skills while learning important leadership, collaboration, and team building techniques-allowing them to gain experience in new areas of practice. And the relationships they form can be of immense help throughout their careers.

Start learning and using new skills, meet terrific people, and take your own career to the next level!

Make your career more fulfilling and productive by volunteering with PMI.

Visit PMI's Volunteer Engagement Platform (VEP) at volunteer.pmi.org for more details.
Also visit our chapter website at: https://pmisydney.org

Contact Information:
My Tran Le

Director of Volunteering, PMI Sydney

volunteering@pmisydney.org

Project Management Institute. Sydney, Australia

Chapter News – April 2023

Announcement: EMBA Program with Universal Business School Sydney

PMI Sydney Chapter is currently in the process of finalising a partnership agreement with Universal Business School Sydney (UBSS). Central to the association agreement is an invitation to all PMI Sydney Chapter members to enrol in the Executive MBA program run by UBSS with a substantial financial discount.

The Executive Master of Business Administration - Executive Delivery Mode is a specifically designed program for those seeking to broaden their knowledge and extend their business network with like senior executives. The program which focusses on entrepreneurship, consists of 16 subjects is run as a hybrid on-line and a two-day face to face session held over a weekend, held in at prominent hotel venues at major cities.

Look for more details to come in our upcoming newsletters!

Speaking at PMI Sydney

Are you ready to inspire others? Tell us what you're passionate about. PMI Sydney Chapter is looking for volunteers to be speakers in 2023 events and participate in panel discussion. Please submit your interest at the following link:
https://forms.gle/Ai6eLJE6U4gxMcPh8

Contributions Wanted for the Newsletter

The PMI Sydney Chapter Newsletter Editorial Team is requesting your contributions for our monthly newsletter, The Critical Path. News, Views, Opinion Pieces, or Articles, all are welcome. We would also be happy to hear about the content you'd like to see in the newsletter.

Please reach out to marketing@pmisydney.org with your contributions or suggestions.

Membership Updates
Sydney Mudau

Message from the Membership Director

PMISC membership Portfolio team is expanding with the addition of four new members who are joining with the goal of serving the Chapter members, engaging with the academy, and growing PMISC. With a shared passion for project management and a commitment to excellence, the new members bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the team.

In the upcoming month, the team is excited to introduce two of its newest members, Daniel and Ibtihal. Daniel is a highly skilled program and project manager who possesses a unique blend of leadership, communication, and technical skills. He has a proven track record of delivering successful programs and projects and is committed to ensuring client satisfaction and building long-lasting relationships.

Ibtihal, on the other hand, is a talented project manager and design director who has over 5 years of experience in the residential and infrastructure fields. As the design director of her own architecture firm, she specializes in creating stunning secondary dwellings that are compliant with CDC, DA, and quality standards. Ibtihal is committed to ensuring client satisfaction and has earned a reputation for delivering exceptional results.

The PMISC membership Portfolio team is thrilled to welcome Daniel and Ibtihal and is looking forward to leveraging their skills and expertise to drive success in the upcoming projects. With a strong focus on collaboration and teamwork, the team is confident that they will be able to meet the needs of the Chapter members and grow PMISC in a meaningful way.

Daniel

Ibtihal

Sydney is a self-driven and motivated individual with a passion for learning and growth. Sydney enjoys steering the membership portfolio to serve PMI Sydney Chapter members.

He is a firm advocate for continuous improvement and passionate about sharing project management best practices with the wider Project Management network.

Membership Updates
Sydney Mudau

Following is the list of members who celebrated either 3, 5, 7, 10, 15 or 20 years of association with the PMI Sydney Chapter in March 2023. We thank you for your association, support and advice.

PMI Sydney Member	Years of Membership
April 2023	
Iris Aliaga Lartiga	3
Marta Baranska	3
Luciana Cajazeira	3
Vinod Iyer	3
Tapiwa Mazani	3
Pablo Silva	3
Dimitrina Stefanova Kuncheva	3
Beate Birr-Lauber	5
Charles Clapham	5
Paul Deane	5
Christina Furfaro	5
Christopher Gaskin	5
Kevin Jogin	5
Barbora Muzikant	5
Aine ORiordan	5
Natalie Brown	5
Linda Ramsbottom	5
Lena Remy	5
Damith Rupasinghe	5
Nayyer Shah	5
Kishore Kumar Sundaresan	5
Seng Yeoh	7
Wayne Davies	7
Mohammad Babar	7
Anthony Scorgie	7
Sandra Vaz	7
Paras Dave	10
Ajay Ayyar	10
Marc Hundleby	15
Hitesh Dajie	15

Membership Updates

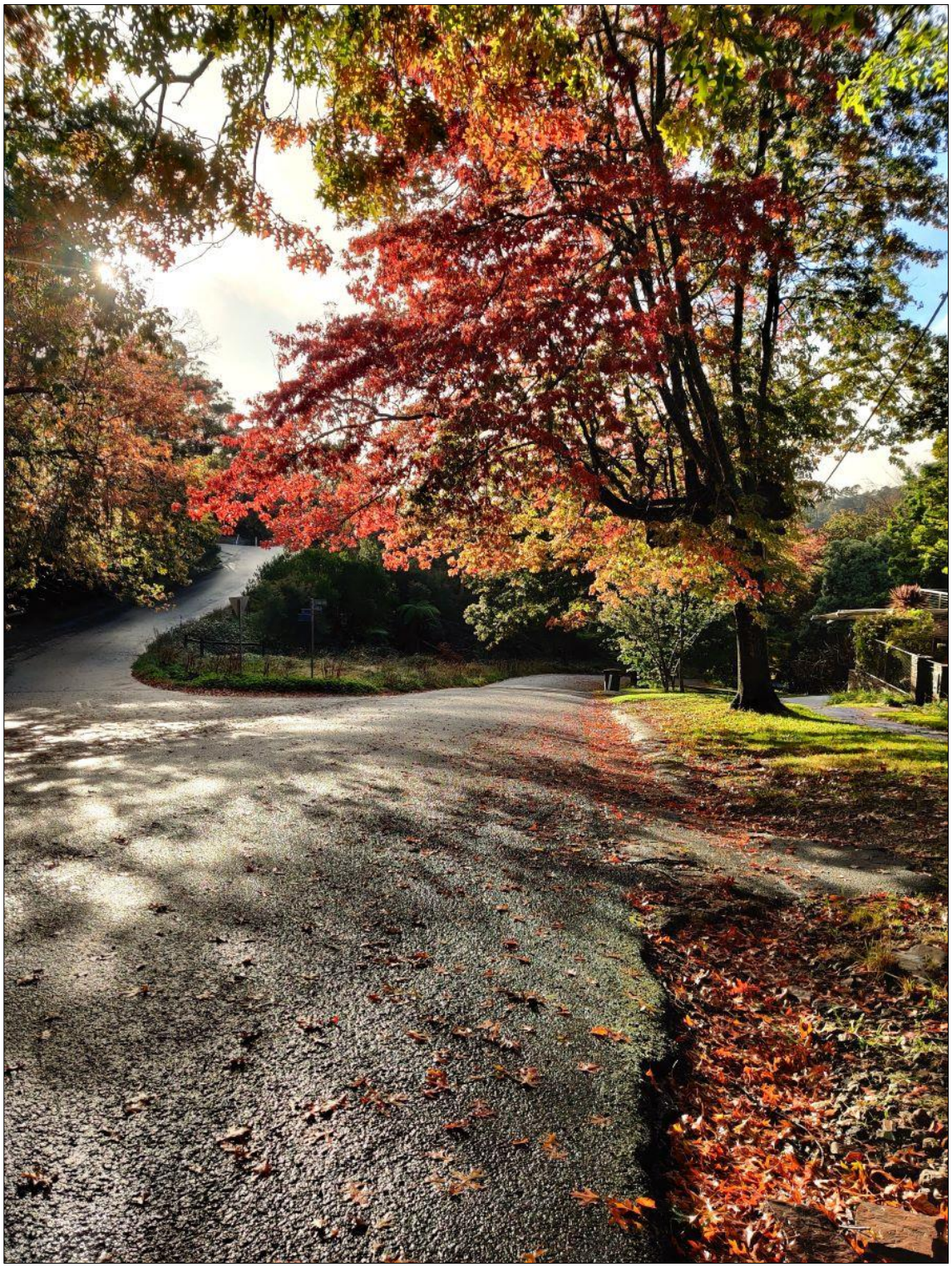
Sydney Mudau

Following is the list of members who celebrated either 3, 5, 7, 10, 15 or 20 years of association with the PMI Sydney Chapter in March 2023. We thank you for your association, support and advice.

PMI Sydney Member	Years of Membership
April 2023	
Lillian Roy	15
Patricia Stockton	15
Pankaj Jain	20
Timothy Sheldrick	20

Photo of the Month

Himadri Chowdhury



About the image

A haunting road beckons the traveller in the Blackheath region of the Blue Mountains.