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November 2024

Editor's Note
Himadri Sekhar Chowdhury

In the midst of all the cacophony around Black Friday deals, it's easy to forget that this is a very recent phenomenon in Australia. Actually, a quick search on Google, and Gemini tells me it was Apple that first introduced Black Friday deals as late as 2013. And now, just 11 years later, it's hard to find a single supermarket or retailer who hasn't jumped onto the Black Friday to Cyber Monday bandwagon.

Just to put things into perspective, according to the Australian Retailers Association (ARA), Australians are likely to expects a record $6.7bn from Friday to Monday – 5.5% more than the same period last year. In comparison, Australians are forecast to spend $11.8 billion on Christmas presents in 2024, up $1.6 billion on last year's figures. It looks like holiday shopping has no relationship with the cost-of-living crisis that we are supposedly in. However, our Black Friday retail volume is only about 10% of retail volume in the USA. There are several interesting theories on how Black Friday became a major shopping day, you can look up Britannica for a few.

Talking about the USA, we have a new President in Donald Trump. After almost a year of nail-biting debates and speculations, assassination attempts, withdrawals and whirlwind campaigns, the race is over and we can probably look at stability. The broader ramifications of the election will only be visible in the next year or more for the USA and its allies, especially in the conflict situations globally, but there have been some immediate impacts on the stock market and investor confidence.

While we were still digesting the US Election results, the Labour government in Canberra was quietly getting ready to pass 32 bills in Senate, including the social media bill, with bipartisan support. The social media bill is introducing a new term – "age-restricted social media platforms" – into the Online Safety Act. This stops under-16s from having accounts on services like Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Reddit and X. The bill arises out of concern for the mental health of our most vulnerable and would come to effect in 2026. We need to see how the big tech companies react and what provisions they bring to verify the ages of the users. Several other bills were also passed on 28 Nov, including the Reserve bank Reforms and three Migration bills.

We are stepping into the last month of the year and everywhere you see, organisations are rushing through their end of the year get togethers. For PMI Sydney Chapter, the end of the year celebrations is just around the corner on 5th December at the Amora Hotel Jamison Sydney. This promises to be even better than the last one, and we definitely hope to see you there. For more news on the upcoming and past events, read the Chapter News.

In this month's **The Critical Path**, we have Stephen Howard from PM Partners talking about Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Quotient, one of the most coveted traits in our digital-first world; Ibrahim Dani discussing how AI has moved from the sidelines as a hypothetical addition to being an essential project management tool; and Haryanni Binti Masarip explaining opportunity framing and it can lead to project success. Lastly, the Photo of the Month by Victoria Rende, one of our editors, is a tribute to the fantastic Sculpture by the Sea exhibition in Bondi from 18 October - 4 November. If you have missed it, look out for its return in 2025.

In the next edition of **The Critical Path**, along with our regular columns, we will also talk about what we did in 2024 and what we can look forward to in 2025.

I am looking for **enthusiastic Volunteers** to run digital marketing campaigns and work on the newsletter. The work is rewarding and would be a great learning experience for a project manager or a project controller. If you think you have what we need, reach out to me at *marketing@pmisydney.org* or our Associate Director Malong Dong at *marcom_ad@pmisydney.org*.

If you have any bright ideas on how to make the newsletter better, we are all ears.
Please reach out to the marketing team at *newsletter@pmisydney.org* or *marketing@pmisydney.org*.

Best,

Himadri Sekhar Chowdhury

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To AI or Not to AI in Project Management? That is No Longer the Question
Ibrahim Dani

I recently skimmed through the book *The AI Edge* by *Jeb Blount* and *Anthony Iannarino*, and I liked their description that AI and Humans are "better together". The authors argue that the key to plugging into AI is to adopt it, adapt it, and become adept at it. Taking this concept to project management, the question is not whether to use AI in project management or not, but how quickly organisations and project managers can effectively adopt AI, adapt it, and become adept at it: how to use AI effectively, tackle inherent challenges, address ethical concerns, and maximise the technology's benefits.

This photo by Author unknown is under license of *CC BY-NC-ND*

AI Integration: An Unstoppable Force in Project Management

AI is no longer a hypothetical addition to project management—it's an inevitable one. The growing adoption of AI tools has provided a competitive edge, enabling data analysis, predictive analytics, and automation of routine tasks, which in turn enhances productivity and drives successful project outcomes. Organisations that are already leveraging AI benefit from its capacity to streamline processes, analyse vast amounts of data, and make project management more efficient. As more businesses recognise AI's advantages, the adoption curve accelerates, making AI integration essential for staying competitive.

Upskilling: Essential for Project Managers in the AI Era

AI's integration calls for a shift in the skill sets of project managers. As AI tools continue to evolve, understanding how to

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.

Beyond Project Management

leverage them becomes crucial. Project managers need to acquire foundational knowledge of AI technologies, data interpretation, and basic analytics. Upskilling in these areas allows them to harness AI more effectively, improving their ability to work alongside AI and use it to augment their capabilities.

AI as a Collaborative, Not a Replacement, Tool

Contrary to fears that AI will replace human roles, its potential lies in its ability to enhance and complement human work. AI can augment project management by handling routine tasks, but it does not replace the need for human judgment, empathy, and leadership. AI's role in project management should be seen as one that enhances the project manager's role rather than competing with it. With AI handling data-driven aspects, project managers can focus on fostering creativity, problem-solving, and collaborative team environments. In other words, AI will not replace project managers, project managers who use AI effectively will replace those who don't.

Overcoming Challenges in AI Adoption

Integrating AI into project management presents several challenges. Addressing these issues proactively can ensure a smoother transition and more productive outcomes. This is where PMOs have an important role to play.

Data Quality Issues: AI's effectiveness depends on the quality of data it uses. Inconsistent or inaccurate data can lead to unreliable insights and flawed decision-making. Implementing robust data governance practices and routinely auditing data sources is critical for maintaining high-quality data.

Resistance to Change: Team members may feel uncertain or anxious about adopting AI. Clear communication, training, and change management programs can mitigate these concerns and demonstrate AI's benefits as an enabler rather than a threat.

Need for Skilled Personnel: Utilising AI effectively requires skilled personnel with expertise in data analysis, AI technology, and critical thinking. Investing in training and upskilling, or hiring talent with these competencies, ensures that AI tools are used to their full potential.

Cost and Resource Allocation: AI adoption can be resource-intensive, necessitating investment in software, infrastructure, and training. Organisations should conduct cost-benefit analyses and seek strategic resource allocation to ensure a return on their AI investments.

Dynamic Project Environments: AI's data-driven decisions may not fully account for the fluid and human-centric nature of projects. AI should therefore be used to support, not replace, human judgment, especially in adapting to changing conditions and unexpected challenges.

Ethical Considerations: Building Trust in AI Systems

As AI becomes more integral to project management, it's essential to address ethical concerns. Ensuring data privacy, avoiding bias in AI algorithms, and promoting transparency in AI-driven decisions are crucial steps. Additionally, organisations should establish clear ethical guidelines and conduct regular audits of AI systems to identify and mitigate potential biases or privacy risks.

By prioritising ethical AI practices, organisations can build trust among team members, stakeholders, and clients. By addressing integration challenges and ethical considerations, organisations and project managers can make the most of AI-enabled project management, ultimately driving better project outcomes, fostering innovation, and maintaining a competitive edge.

Conclusion: Embrace the AI Evolution

The shift toward AI in project management is not a matter of "if" but "how fast." Aspiring project managers should focus on upskilling in AI competencies and staying informed about emerging AI technologies. Familiarity with AI tools and an understanding of data analysis will be invaluable as they enter a landscape where AI plays a central role. Embracing a learning mindset and developing adaptability will allow them to capitalise on AI's benefits while staying resilient in the face of rapid technological change.

Pathway to Project Success: Embracing Opportunity Framing
Haryanni Binti Masarip

In a world where complexity and change are constants, projects must create value not only for organizations but also for broader communities and stakeholders. The question is - How can we ensure that projects are initiated to create value in the first place?

At the PMI Global Summit 2024, Pierre Le Manh, President and CEO of PMI, issued a thought-provoking call to the project management community: it's time to reframe project success. Moving beyond the traditional triple constraints of scope, budget, and schedule, giving way to measures of long-term value, sustainability, and adaptability, he urged professionals to adopt a more value-driven approach.

This article echoes Mr. Le Manh's vision, introducing opportunity framing as a value-driven approach for emerging projects to reflect the trend in global project management.

Opportunity Framing: A Structured Pathway to Project Success

Opportunity framing is a strategic approach designed to systematically assess and define a project's goals, ensuring alignment with organizational priorities and stakeholder expectations. The exact form of an opportunity frame may vary depending on the project's complexity and nature, but it consistently addresses three essential questions that guide the project toward successful outcomes.

Step 1: Define the Opportunity — Where Are We Now?

The opportunity framing process begins by evaluating the current situation to identify the underlying opportunity or problem driving the project. This stage lays the groundwork for understanding the context and conditions influencing the opportunity, shaped by both external and internal factors.

Identify Opportunity Drivers: Opportunities often arise due to external or internal changes, such as evolving market demands, technological advancements, or shifts in stakeholder expectations. Defining these drivers clarifies why the project is necessary and relevant.

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Assess External Conditions: Analysing the external environment, including market forecasts, competition, and regulatory landscapes, provides insights into potential demand and competitive positioning.

Evaluate Internal Capabilities: Understanding the company's current capacity, technology, and cost structure in relation to the opportunity establishes a baseline. This evaluation is essential for identifying gaps that the project may need to bridge to achieve success.

This step captures the project's starting point and situates it within the broader organizational and market context.

Step 2: Define Success — Where Do We Want to Be?

The next step involves setting clear, measurable objectives that represent the project's target outcomes. This includes analysing key areas to translate the broader opportunity into a concrete vision of success:

Establish Target Conditions: Define the specific business needs and objectives that the project aims to fulfill. These objectives should be measurable and aligned with strategic goals to guide the project toward meaningful outcomes.

Define Boundary Conditions and Constraints: Set scope limits, such as financial, geographic, and technological constraints, and fixed parameters that cannot be compromised. This clarity ensures that all solutions operate within feasible limits.

Conduct Stakeholder Analysis: Engaging with stakeholders ensures diverse perspectives are accounted for. Stakeholder analysis ranks each stakeholder's level of interest and influence, shaping the project's direction and success criteria.

Identify Risks and Uncertainties: Proactively identifying risks associated with the opportunity allows the project team to plan mitigation strategies, establishing a more resilient framework.

Determine Decision Criteria and Value Drivers: Establish decision-making criteria for evaluating project options, including financial metrics, risk levels, and qualitative factors like public support or environmental impact. Value drivers that directly impact success are prioritized, such as improved flexibility or reduced delivery timelines.

This step solidifies the project's goals, outlining the success parameters and the performance gap between the current state and desired outcomes.

### Step 3: Define the Plan — How Do We Get There?

The final stage in opportunity framing involves developing an actionable plan to bridge the performance gap. This includes exploring potential options, conducting evaluations, and setting up a roadmap for execution.

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Develop Project Options: Identify at least one viable option that meets all established boundary conditions. Various approaches are considered to address the performance gap.

Evaluate Options: Conduct a technical and economic analysis to assess each option's viability, including costs, resources, and anticipated outcomes, ultimately aiming to identify the superior option that aligns with success criteria and stakeholder interests.
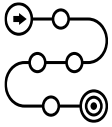
Create the Action Plan: The action plan, which includes necessary data, resources, budget, and timelines, is proposed to the project's sponsor for approval. This structured approach ensures the best project option is advanced to meet the defined target conditions.

Benefits of Opportunity Framing for Projects and Organizations

Opportunity framing provides a structured approach that benefits both projects and organizations by establishing clear boundaries, aligning stakeholders, identifying risks, and facilitating value capture.

Sets Clear Boundaries: Opportunity framing clarifies project scope by defining what will and will not be included, ensuring focus and preventing scope creep.

Creates a Shared Understanding: By integrating best practices from project management, opportunity framing fosters a shared vision among stakeholders. Through collaborative sessions, it creates a unified roadmap that aligns decision-makers on project goals.

Identifies and Mitigates Risks: Opportunity framing engages stakeholders early to proactively address risks and constraints, reducing potential setbacks.

Enables Roadmap Development: The structured process of opportunity framing facilitates a robust action plan with clear milestones and accountability.

For organizations, opportunity framing supports innovation, decision-making, and effective consultation.

Facilitates Innovation and Improvement: By framing problems as opportunities, organizations create a foundation for innovation and continuous improvement.

Helps Capture and Maximize Value: Opportunity framing aids in identifying areas of value within an initiative, enabling informed decisions and optimizing resource allocation.

Manages Diverse Opportunities: The process is versatile, addressing various strategic needs, including new business ventures, crisis management, restructuring, and methodology development.

Leverages Consultation for Insightful Decision-Making: Opportunity Framing Workshops provide a creative environment for internal and external input, incorporating diverse insights and ideas into decision-making.

Opportunity framing brings structure to complex opportunities, guiding projects and organizations to achieve their goals while maximizing value and fostering innovation.

Conclusion

Mr. Le Manh's call to redefine project success presents a timely opportunity for the project management community to embrace a value-centred approach. Opportunity framing offers a structured method for achieving this transformation, enhancing collaboration, proactively managing risks, and creating a solid foundation for sustainable project success. By incorporating opportunity framing techniques, project managers can shape projects that drive meaningful, lasting impact and consistently deliver exceptional value. Embracing this tool is not only about redefining project success; it's about building a future where projects act as catalysts for positive change.

Mastering Emotional Intelligence for Better Project Outcomes
Stephen Howard

Any project is only as good as the team working on it – and that goes double for project managers, which is why experienced PMs spend so much time developing their emotional intelligence (EQ). Stephen Howard explains what EQ is, why these soft skills are so critical to a project's success, and how you can develop them.
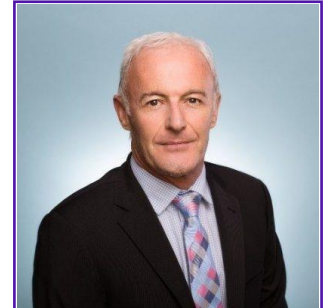
Stephen Howard is a Senior Consultant, Facilitator and Business Practice Lead at PMPartners

pm-partners

What is emotional intelligence?

The term 'emotional intelligence' – also known as the emotional quotient (EQ) – was created by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer in 1990 as "a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action."

This typically starts with self-awareness, but the outcomes of EQ vary depending on the situation. In the context of project management skills, EQ is all about being able to engage effectively, defuse internal (e.g. team members) and external (e.g. stakeholders) conflicts, and overcome challenges.

As with other managerial positions, the value of robust EQ skills for PMs extends beyond themselves. For example, in highly stressful situations, of which there are many over the lifecycle of a project, a good project manager needs to be able to empathise with others in order to understand their concerns, their stresses and their overall goals.

In short, EQ is the culmination of many different soft skills required to successfully oversee a task or project.

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Why is emotional intelligence so critical for project management?

There's a wealth of research pointing to the relationship between social and emotional abilities and personal success – in fact, one study conducted over a forty-year period found them to be four times more important than IQ in determining professional success and prestige (Feist and Barron, 1996).

Of course, every project manager wants to succeed, but they also want to ensure they can get the best out of their people. Of all the different careers, as a PM you are going to run into problems on a daily basis. That's the life of a project manager.

EQ is about more than just knowing your own emotions and being able to recognise the best way to respond to other people's emotions. It's also about having the innate sense to adjust your behaviour and strategy to suit a particular project environment and the vast array of personalities and behaviours involved in that environment. That's the only way you can get the best out of the relationships of the people around you.

Without that focus on emotional soft skills, PMs can easily lose control of a project and potentially see small hurdles balloon into damaging problems. And these skills become even more important as you progress

When you look at the Project Manager Competency Development Framework, every single competency falling into each of the eight core competencies requires a level of EQ to be successful. As the project manager grows in their career into managing larger more complex projects, so is the need for their EQ to grow in depth, breadth and experience.

Learning how to improve emotional intelligence

The following 6 EQ skills are part of a 12-point list that's applicable for all PMs across every industry. It can be a manifesto of sorts to guide you on this journey to developing your EQ capabilities.

1. Listen – don't just hear what someone is saying, take active steps to address their needs.
2. Ask the right questions of the right people at the right time.
3. Master the art of facilitation.
4. Lead with influence – be someone who can convince people to follow them over the life of a project.
5. Be a firm negotiator – the idea that having 'good people skills' means you're always appeasing people is a myth.
6. Look after yourself.

Of course, you may think 'easier said than done' when looking at some of these skills. For instance, how do you learn how to convince people to follow you, or bolster your negotiation skills? As a starting point, try putting the following three tips into action:

• Connect with a mentor, someone who has similar values to you and who you admire in their role as a project manager or other related position.

- Look for courses covering the above capabilities. There are many excellent courses that provide real hands-on education delivered by highly skilled and experienced facilitators. For example, [Advanced Facilitator: Conflict and Collaboration](#), [Building and Leading a Team](#), and [Communicating with Impact.](#)
- Read authentic, endorsed publications and books. The enlightenment from this approach is extremely fulfilling and a great learning journey.

And while it's listed last, when it comes to skill number 6, it's important to make looking after yourself a priority. Stress and the ability to manage it is all [part and parcel of a project manager's job](#), especially within high-pressure project environments.

Whichever industry you're operating in, the chances are you're facing some level of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and/or ambiguity. In this VUCA climate, it's more crucial than ever to develop and leverage your emotional intelligence – and your soft skills more broadly. It's only with robust EQ that you can recognise these new challenges and work successfully with other people to overcome them.

To find out more about how you can build your soft skills, from facilitation and leadership to communication and conflict management, [contact one of our personal development experts online](#) or call us on 1300 70 13 14 today.

This article is an abridged version of the original – [for more comprehensive advice, read the complete text here](#).

Chapter News – November 2024

PMISC - 5th December 2024 - Christmas Party 🎉

After the resounding success of last year, we are pleased to invite you to this year's End of Year / Christmas party. With a promise to be just as good (if not, better), we are so excited to tie up the year with our members and friends. Please join us for an evening of live music, festivities, volunteers awards, raffle prices, and great food! 🎄

Event Details

📅 **Date:** Thursday, 5th December 2024
⏰ **Time:** 6:00 PM - 10:00 PM
📍 **Location:** The Ballroom, Amora Hotel Jamison, 11 Jamison St Sydney NSW 2000

Chapter News – November 2024

Event Alert: PMI Global Summit 2024 Highlights by ANZ Chapter Leaders

Join us for an engaging virtual event hosted by PMI Chapters across Australia and New Zealand, where we bring the latest insights from the PMI Global Summit 2024 to our local community. Designed to connect project management professionals with global thought leadership, this session will recap essential topics, lessons, and innovations discussed at the summit.

In this event, we'll explore three of the hottest topics influencing the project management field today:

- **Keynote Speaker Highlights** – Discover the advice and inspiration shared by world-renowned leaders at the summit, distilled into actionable insights.
- **Generative AI** – Gain an understanding of the transformative impact of generative AI on project management, along with practical advice on adapting this technology to real-world challenges.
- **Leadership Trends** – Learn about emerging leadership practices that can foster team resilience, engagement, and success in an ever-evolving project landscape.

📅 **Date:** 10th December 2024
🕐 **Time:** 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM
📍 **Where:** Virtual
✨ **Cost:** Free for PMI Members and Students and $20 for Non-Members
🔗 Click **here** to register.

PMI Sydney Mentoring Program – Application Period Extended!

Great news! The application period for the PMI Sydney Mentoring Program has been extended into **February 2025**. This gives more time for those interested to apply and benefit from the opportunity to connect with experienced mentors within the project management community.

Whether you are looking to grow your skills, gain valuable industry insights, or expand your professional network, the PMI Sydney Mentoring Program offers a supportive environment for learning and development.

To learn more about the program, including how to apply and further details, please visit our Mentoring Program Page.
We would like to thank everyone who has already expressed interest in the program and look forward to connecting with you all soon.

For any questions or further inquiries, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at development@pmisydney.org.
We look forward to supporting your growth through the PMI Sydney Mentoring Program!

Chapter News – November 2024

Past event: Why We Must Take Climate Change Seriously, Climate Crossroads

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended the PMI Sydney Chapter's event, "Why We Must Take Climate Change Seriously: Climate Crossroads," on November 14th. Your presence and engagement made this critical conversation a resounding success.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our incredible speakers, Sashi Sivam, and Dr. Parisa Amouzgar, for their thought-provoking insights into the irreversible impacts of climate change, the urgency of emission reductions, and the link between climate change and extreme weather. Your expertise continues to inspire us to take meaningful action.

To all the participants – thank you for contributing to the dialogue and bringing your energy and commitment to this vital topic. Together, we can make a difference!

Let's continue to champion sustainability and work toward a brighter, greener future. 🌱

Chapter News – November 2024
Past Event: Project Management Day of Service (PMDoS) 2024

On the 7th of November, PMI Sydney proudly hosted the **Project Management Day of Service** (**PMDoS**) event, a day where project management professionals and Not-for-Profits came together to create practical solutions for real challenges. This event showcased the unique power of project management to make a tangible difference in our communities.

💡 The day kicked off with energy and purpose as teams of experienced project managers partnered with charities and Not-for-Profits including Museums & Galleries of NSW, Bicycle NSW, Australian Cancer Research Foundation, Older Women's Network NSW, Plumtree Children's Services, National Heart Foundation of Australia, and Legacy Club Services. Each team focused on addressing a specific challenge, developing actionable plans designed to help these organisations maximise their impact.

From brainstorming sessions to strategy-building, the room was full with ideas, collaboration, and a shared commitment to positive change. By the end of the day, participating organisations left with practical, tailored strategies they could adopt and implement.

🧠 Highlights of the Day

- Collaborative Breakout Sessions: Teams worked closely with charity representatives, turning challenges into clear, actionable solutions.
- Impactful Networking: Participants connected, shared insights, and built relationships that will continue to grow beyond the event.

Humera Shazin
Associate Director – PMDOS Portfolio

- Sustainable Outcomes: Each charity/not for profit walked away with a roadmap for success, equipping them to make an even greater difference in their communities.

📣 This year's PMDoS wouldn't have been possible without the generous support of our Event Partner, Atlassian Foundation. Their ongoing commitment and passion to make social impact has been instrumental in driving the success of this event.

We look forward to seeing how the plans and connections formed at PMDoS 2024 will continue to make an impact in the months and years ahead.

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Project Management: The Power of Connection and Community
Olufemi Ogunsiji

In the world of project management, a field that influences nearly every aspect of modern life—connection is key. No professional can thrive in isolation, especially in a discipline that demands collaboration, innovation, and a shared vision for success.

Joining the PMI Sydney Chapter is more than just a step forward in your career; it's a transformative experience. By connecting with other industry professionals, you gain access to fresh perspectives, cutting-edge ideas, and a network of support to navigate challenges. Beyond professional growth, your contributions to the community through volunteering and engagement create a ripple effect of positive impact.

In a profession that drives change and touches lives, you don't have to go alone. Be part of a community that empowers you to grow, learn, and make a difference—because no project is accomplished in isolation.

You can expect 3 things when you join PMI Sydney Chapter

1. Build Connections
The opportunity to expand your professional network via chapter events and meetings. These gatherings allow you to engage with industry leaders, exchange ideas, and gain insights to broaden your perspective.

2. Advance Your Skills
You can be assured you'd be taking advantage of chapter-hosted workshops, educational sessions, and career development opportunities to grow your capabilities and professional net worth. These custom-designed events are tailored to help you grow your expertise and advance your career.

3. Give Back to the Community
A very good platform to use your skills to make an impact. By volunteering for chapter-led social good initiatives, you can drive meaningful changes and contribute to causes that matter in your local area.

Joining PMI isn't just a membership, it's an investment in your career and your community.

Don't miss out on the chance to elevate your skills, expand your network, and make a lasting impact.

For more information kindly visit our [website](#) or send an mail to membership@pmisydney.org

Photo of the Month
Victoria Rende

About the image
Sculptures by the sea: Yuko Takahashi's sculpture 'Fortitude (Edition of 8)'