MANAGEMENT OF REMOTE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS: THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

Bassam BAROUDI and Shane MCANULTY

University of South Australia | School of Natural & Built Environments, North Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia. Email: sam.baroudi@unisa.edu.au

Abstract

Australia is currently experiencing considerable growth in remote construction activity largely due to its burgeoning resources sector. Remote construction projects appear to introduce problems not witnessed within urbanised locations. Hence, the aim of this paper is to investigate issues in respect to remote Australian construction projects. The research method used a questionnaire survey to collect data from industry practitioners with experience in remote area construction. The study confirms that many challenges are associated with construction projects based in remote areas. Key findings indicate that personnel recruitment, social issues, productivity, procurement and delivery, pricing aspects, and infrastructure and communications adequacy can be problematic. The research is expected to inform construction industry practitioners on these issues and is thought to hold relevance to others that work within similarly challenging environments.

Keywords

Construction, remote locations, project management, resourcing.

INTRODUCTION

Weippert et al. (2003) contend that the construction industry is quite unique and highly fragmented having a multitude of stakeholders connected to any one project. Hence, construction projects by their very nature present a complex management exercise. Furthermore, many believe that remote project work creates additional challenges (Storey, 2001; Gent, 2004; Dainty et al., 2005; Mojahed and Aghazadeh, 2008; McKenzie, 2010). This study aims to investigate various management issues on remote Australian construction projects to identify the extent of the problem.

The Australian Construction Industry

The construction industry is a major sector within Australian industry. It is the fourth largest employer in the country providing employment to almost one million people. Furthermore, building and engineering construction combined are worth $151 billion to Gross Domestic Product. This makes it the fourth largest sector in the country in terms of its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (ABS, 2010).

Construction activity within Australia has consistently been on the rise largely due to the resources boom with ever increasing demands for raw and processed materials from internal and external clients (Leschorn, 2006). A great amount of this construction activity takes place in remote areas throughout Australia. For example,