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# CONSULTING MATTERS

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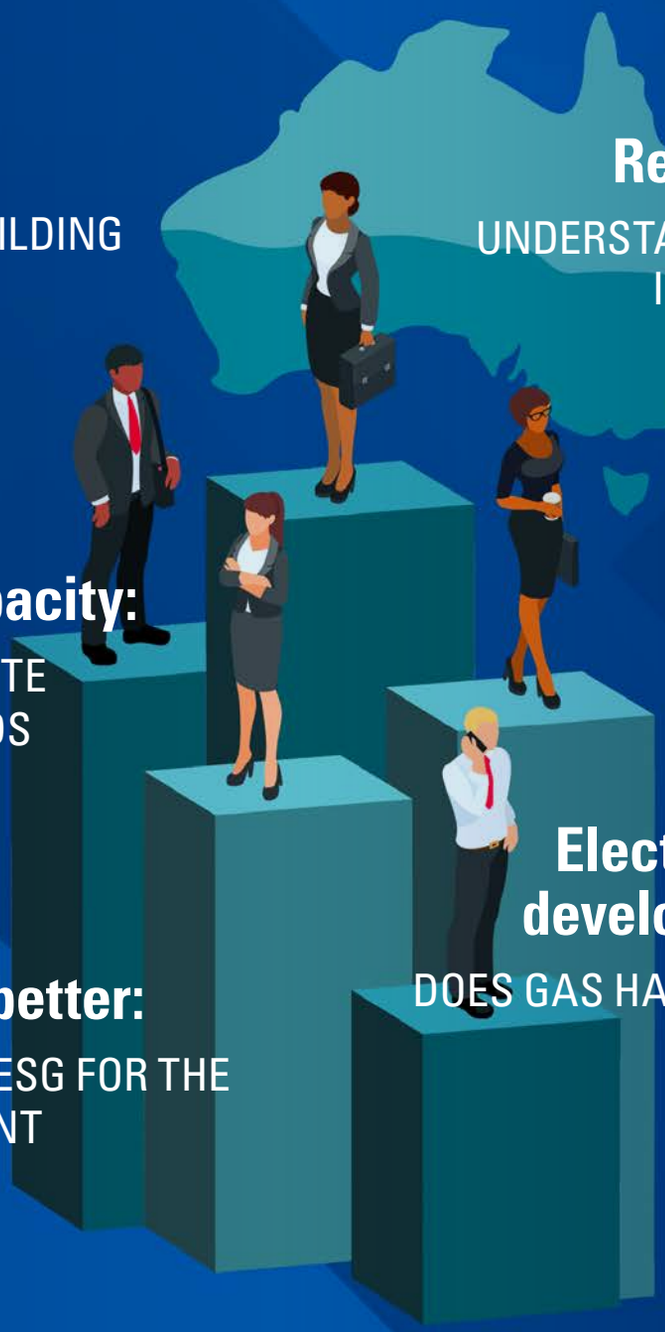
## REBUILDING CAPACITY





# SUBSURFACE UTILITY ENGINEERING: ARE YOU AS5488 SAFE?

Image : Stantec ideas

It doesn't sound like a stimulating read, but Standard AS5488 has been a national and global life saver when it comes to protecting our construction workers since it was established in 2013. Its objective was to improve the poorly regulated approach to managing underground utilities and avoid serious injuries and fatalities of construction workers.

Initially created to provide Subsurface Utility Information, it was updated in 2019 to include Subsurface Utility Engineering providing faster, safer, and more cost-effective processes for the consistent classification and management of information.

## What is Subsurface Utility Engineering?

Subsurface Utility Engineering, or SUE in its abbreviated form, is a specialist engineering service incorporating geophysical mapping, vacuum excavation, and computer surveying to allow underground facilities to be located both horizontally and vertically.

SUE's role is to ensure the responsibility for recording, designing, and managing existing and new underground utilities rests at the feet of the design engineer. Once the data is collected it's provided and managed in an electronic format for the project owner or engineer during the design stage of a construction project.

Working with Standards Australia and Engineers Australia, Rob Sansbury at Stantec was a leader and champion of SUE from the beginning.

"We wanted SUE to be recognised as a specialist area of engineering. AS5488 has created a rulebook for all design engineers to follow to avoid significant injury of constructors," Sansbury says.

"This Standard provides a better and safer outcome for everyone by implementing solutions during the engineering design phase, rather than waiting until construction occurs," he added.

There are so many intricacies and nuances associated with developing a project, including the consideration of what utilities may be affected and how to design around, protect or relocate them. Anyone who has ever worked within an arm's length of subsurface utilities will recall negative outcomes and on review will most likely agree that with better collaboration things could have ended better.

## It's time to embrace AS5488 and reap the benefits

The safety and cost saving benefits from improved management of subsurface utilities has been seen in countries where the rulebooks been in place for many years – such as the USA, UK, and Canada.

As well as these obvious safety and cost saving benefits, adoption of AS5488 will provide fewer project delays, improved environmental outcomes and a more comprehensive database of underground information.

> *This Standard provides a better and safer outcome for everyone by implementing solutions during the engineering design phase, rather than waiting until construction occurs*

**Rob Sanbury**, Director, Defence Sector Leader, Stantec

Sansbury says "At Stantec we have adopted AS5488 as our standard of care since its inception. In fact, you could say we are the leaders in this space. The simple truth is, if everyone in the industry mandated their use of AS5488 we could avoid significant injury of our construction workers and save them from the perils of underground utilities".

By **Sarah Gasson**, Marketing Team Leader, Australia, Stantec