

## Preventing a future skills shortage

The continuing decline in the number of students enrolling in electrical apprenticeships across Australia is a major concern and needs addressing urgently if we are to reverse Australia's skills shortage.

"Electricians are more and more in demand as technology becomes increasingly complex and integrated. Internally, we're seeing the introduction of smart homes with interconnected electrical equipment controlled remotely from a single device such as a phone.

"Externally, as consumers seek to reduce their energy bills and their environmental footprint, they're installing solar panels and battery storage systems," said Suresh Manickam, CEO National Electrical & Communications Association (NECA).

High priority infrastructure projects such as Melbourne's Metro Rail upgrade, Western Sydney's Airport (Badgery's Creek), the Perth Freight Link and Queensland's Ipswich Motorway will also require significant numbers of licenced electrical workers.

The drop in numbers of students applying for apprenticeship courses has declined steeply across the board with a 6.6 per cent decrease in the number of students in Australia undertaking government-funded training in the first nine months of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016\*.

"NECA has consistently maintained that we need a greater investment in vocational education and training in order to reverse Australia's skills shortage. To this end, we encourage government to make training more attractive to a greater diversity of students, along with support for females entering trades, greater incentives for apprentices in rural and regional areas, and tax relief for employers who take on mature age apprentices," said Manickam.

"As maturing electricians continue to retire, unless we address this issue now and heavily promote the benefits of a career in the electrical trades, the rate in which our workforce is replaced will have an adverse effect upon multiple aspects to the sector," he added.

NECA has called upon government to actively promote trades career pathways as an attractive alternative to a University degree.

**-ENDS-**

*\*NCVER Government –funded students and courses January to September 2017*

### Media enquiries and interviews

E [lynda.proude@neca.asn.au](mailto:lynda.proude@neca.asn.au) M 0458 726 355