

## ***Electrical Innovative Delivery and Pathways Project***

***Background*** - The **NECA Electrical Innovative Delivery and Pathways Project** is supported by the Federal Government's *Australian Apprenticeship Program - Alternative Delivery Pilots*. The Government Program is establishing a series of industry-led pilots to test and open up alternative training approaches on a broader scale providing greater skills development, choice and industry acceptance.

***The NECA Alternate Delivery Pilot Project*** - The *NECA Pilot* will operate across Australia for a two-year period from July 2016 and will be delivered by public and private sector training partners across the electrical contracting sector. It will explore opportunities to encourage broader skills development approaches for entry level and qualified tradespeople to enter the sector. The *Pilot* will examine the challenges and regulatory burdens to increased industry participation and training practice development. It will build upon the findings of the:

- *Project Enhancement Activities* including extensive consultations with electrical contractors; and
- *Apprentice Productivity Project* which examined potential gains that can be achieved by electrical contractors through a better understanding of the performance of their apprentices - including ways to improve their effectiveness through alternative employment and training options that can contribute to more productive workplaces.

NECA also provided input based on these reports to the National Apprenticeship Reform Advisory Group and discussions with the Department of Education and Training on apprenticeship issues facing the industry.

The *Electrical Innovative Delivery and Pathways Project* will test and evaluate the essential elements of alternative delivery models - to be designed from industry experience - across **four core activity areas** - *Training Relevance to Industry Need; Training for New Business Opportunities; Attracting New and Diversified Entrants; and Workplace Support and Effectiveness*.

### ***Who will be involved in the Project?***

A range of *different providers* has been chosen across different jurisdictions to maximize the scope of the trials and to assist NECA in delivering the four core activities:

- College of Electrical Training and Electrical Group Training (WA);
- NECA Education and Careers (Victoria and Tasmania);
- PEER VEET (SA);
- TAFE Queensland; and
- NECA Training and NECA Group Training (NSW, ACT and Queensland).

NECA will establish a Memorandum of Understanding with each Provider Partner outlining strategies, training approaches and participant numbers to facilitate the implementation of the core activities.

A *Project Management Committee (PMC)* will be established to provide strategic and practical advice on the development and delivery of the *Project* and to monitor the project deliverables. The *PMC* will be chaired by the NECA Chief Executive officer and involve - representatives of business, faculty heads or General Managers of all involved partner training providers, a senior Federal Government representative and a senior state training authority representative.

**What will be trialled?**

Within the four core activities there are a prescribed number of programs that will be developed and trialled to address a number of critical issues needing attention in skills development and training approaches in the highly regulated electrical and communication industry. Each initiative will be developed in consultation with partner providers, i.e. NECA, relevant departments, and employers.

<b>Training Relevance to Industry Need</b>	
<b>Program 1 - Pre apprenticeships and focussed on and off-the-job skills training</b>	<p>The program will focus on developing a national approach to better preparation arrangements for apprentices. It has become evident that states have developed different approaches to pre apprenticeship programs with different funding models, provider eligibility requirements and articulation, often irrespective of the success of industry led models. A national approach is needed and industry has called for this.</p> <p>There is a need for preparing apprentices more adequately for faster job readiness, and recognising the important role of pre-apprenticeship arrangements in retention and selection processes. It will examine how the provision of short, targeted upfront pre-apprenticeship training can be used to ensure apprentices are more work ready, understand the basics of the industry and have hand skill familiarity – i.e. models of standardised upfront off and on-the-job training programs where participants will complete nationally recognised designated units before being offered entry into an apprenticeship. The program will also examine how these competencies will be validated in the workplace and be recognised as part of the apprenticeship. Employers participating in the trial will be encouraged to take on participants who complete the training program.</p>
<b>Program 2 - Expanding customised training for employers with Partner Providers</b>	<p>A constant issue raised during employer consultations has been concerns about the right combination of competencies that can be learnt on and off-the-job to ensure an effective apprenticeship that is relevant to the various workplaces across the industry. The program will test the approaches to apprenticeship training through the consideration of training package flexibility to provide customised and contextualised training delivery that is relevant to the sector where the employer is based (i.e. industrial, commercial or domestic) and how this can better align the work experience of the participant to the off-the-job training. Employers will be surveyed on what their precise needs are and what extent customisation is desired or offered across all sectors.</p>

<p><b>Program 3 - Examining current practices and developing resources for better targeted simulated training for Partner Providers</b></p>	<p>An issue identified by providers, training authorities, regulators and some employers is the way many of the skills are undertaken later in the apprenticeship and the inability of many employers to provide workplace experience in some skill areas due to the types of work undertaken by the employer. Often, employers demand direct employment of apprentices rather than use group training arrangements. This has led to an increased reliance on RTOs to provide simulated workplace experience to ensure that an apprentice actually undertakes the skills in workplace type settings. This program will examine some key priorities for simulation, what models and approaches have been used by provider partners and the successes and challenges of each, and what emerging approaches are being considered by some regulators to introduce tighter controls on simulation processes and the potential impact of those strategies. A trial will be undertaken in a few selected areas of the use of simulated workplace experience to deliver key units of competency including possible involvement and interest by smaller employers who may have difficulty in providing the breadth of experience to their apprentices. Resources for a small number of competencies would be determined after consultation with employers and RTOs. Some support materials will be developed for use by RTOs, including the development of online materials for use under pilots that will be validated and aligned with agreed quality assessment processes.</p>
<p><b>Training for new business opportunities</b></p>	
<p><b>Program 4 - Developing training pathways, resources and trialling training under Energy Efficient Technologies</b></p>	<p>The development of new business models of operation for electrical contractors is an important factor in employers taking advantage of new and emerging technologies in their work. The emergence of energy saving issues across the work of the industry includes energy management; lighting, pumps, fans and motors; solar generation systems; heating and cooling. There has also been recent developments in standalone batteries and the Ethernet which require urgent attention and incorporation into nationally recognised training arrangements. It is evident that apprentices know little of these important emerging business opportunities. A course needs to be mapped to the needs to be mapped and expanded to the <i>'Develop Strategies to address Sustainability for Electrical Installations'</i> Skills Set with appropriate support materials developed targeting apprentices and immediate graduating apprentices. The course will be delivered in a variety of ways as standalone units that will involve a national trial across a range of sites with a comprehensive examination of materials, course structure and requirements.</p>

<b>Attracting New and Diversified Entrants</b>	
<p><b>Program 5 - Operationalising a nationally endorsed and available Readiness Assessment tool which assists recruitment and identifies literacy and numeracy needs and trails a related course</b></p>	<p>The program will develop and implement a program/model for identifying and addressing language, literacy and numeracy issues - a key factor in apprentice retention and in widening entry opportunities to a broader range of applicants. Many young applicants may have the application and attributes required of being a successful tradesperson but lack the literacy and numeracy skills to complete some of the more technical aspects of the off-the-job training required in the electrotechnology and communications qualifications. The program will develop an enhanced national industry-endorsed, and available entry-level assessment and recruitment tool – with an underpinning standard national language, literacy and numeracy program.</p>
<p><b>Program 6 - Trial innovative approaches to increase the number and outcomes for women into the industry</b></p>	<p>The program will target young women and establish strategies that encourage young women to undertake and complete electrical apprenticeships. A range of models that have been tried by some providers and other specialist agencies to support women in the trades will be examined and trialled in different locations. Better promotion of success stories and best practices will be undertaken including the use of previous female NECA apprentices of the year to promote success in the industry. NECA group training organisations will be important in this program.</p>
<p><b>Program 7 - Developing more streamlined resources and pathways for Adult Apprenticeship Pathways, particularly for those with some relevant experience</b></p>	<p>A major issue raised by employers is the decline of the adult apprenticeship pathway due to the uncompetitive nature of the increased costs associated with older apprentices pay and other conditions. The program will trial an Adult Apprenticeship Pathway which incorporates - RPL against the Certificate III; off the job up front training; and a formal workplace commencement to undertake the final competencies (thereby retaining the integrity of the apprenticeship model).</p>

<b>Workplace Support and Effectiveness</b>	
<p><b>Program 8 – Developing and implementing a nationally consistent and effective Capstone assessment arrangements</b></p>	<p>The <i>Capstone Test</i> requirements differ markedly across Australia but are pivotal to regulator standards and employer confidence in quality outcomes. The models vary from a fully government regulated test undertaken under the auspices of government, to a prescribed government option, through to a reliance of RTOs using what is contained in the actual training package alone. There has been a significant high failure rate across all models when apprentices sit these tests. The program will examine and trial innovative national approaches to prepare apprentices for the <i>Capstone Test</i> and other ways to improve the test outcomes and efficiencies. Alternative models of industry engagement, industry validation, and additional testing arrangements following completion of the qualification will be examined, including determining employer support.</p>
<p><b>Program 9 – Developing and trialling a course for Apprentice Mentor/ Supervisors</b></p>	<p>Given the importance of mentoring of Apprentices in the workplace there is a need to develop arrangements, including support materials that incorporate training for apprentice mentors and supervisors into overall training delivery. This is seen as critical in improving employer confidence in the training system, improved completion rates, better understanding of how to improve the use of Profiling systems and raising awareness of bullying and other workplace issues. The program will design a short course, in consultation with employers/owners, apprentice supervisors and apprentices, and trial that nationally. It will target employees who assume the role of workplace mentors of apprentices to enhance their coaching and mentoring role, including their efforts to motivate apprentices, teach them about the work, develop their skills, provide them with feedback and recognise their achievement. It will also ensure that participants will be in a position to provide advice on how an apprentice has applied their learning and skills in the workplace, and provide an opinion about their ability to do the job. The development of the “Apprentice Mentors in the Workplace Program” will provide an opportunity to engage with employers to promote alternative pathways and other innovative solutions for their apprentices and workplaces. This will include the design of a course for the industry targeted at small contactors with flexible delivery arrangements and reduced costs.</p>

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