

A word from the CEO

It seems almost unbelievable that we are already heading into winter – before we know it we will be planning for the next financial year.

Policy development

We were very pleased to see the re-establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) and the introduction of the Registered Organisations (RO) Act. We believe the reinstated ABCC will help deliver a more productive, efficient and transparent building and construction sector.

Press coverage as I write this update suggests we may even see further improvements to the legislation under the *Building Code 2016*. This will certainly be an interesting development to watch. Both the ABCC and RO Act legislations were passed at the end of last year as a result of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. So although these Royal Commissions can seem to take a disproportionate amount of time to reach a conclusion, they can deliver outcomes.

Another important issue for our sector is security of payments reforms, and we will continue to advocate for change. If you would like to read more about our policies please check our website: www.neca.asn.au

The Alternative Pathways Project (APP)

This initiative is progressing well. Within the program there are four core activities and nine programs that are being developed and trialled. The aim is to address critical issues needing attention in skills development and training approaches in the highly regulated electrical and communications industry.

Each initiative is being developed in consultation with partner providers, i.e. NECA, relevant government departments and employers. On the following page you will find a more in-depth update.



Excellence Awards 2017

The submission process kicks-off in the states and territories right now, and will culminate at the national event in Sydney this year, at the new International Convention Centre (ICC) in Darling Harbour, on Thursday 23 November, and promises to be a spectacular night in a spectacular new venue.

For anyone who has not taken part in the Excellence Awards I thought you might be interested to know how it all works. The first stage in the Excellence Awards process is for NECA members to submit their projects in the 13 categories. These projects are then judged at the state and territory level, and finalists are invited to our state and territory events – lunches in NSW, Queensland and Victoria, and dinners in the ACT, South Australia/ Northern Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia.

The first of these events is the Victorian lunch in Melbourne on the Friday 4 August and the last event will be the NSW lunch in Sydney on Friday 8 September. All the state and territory winners are then invited to the national event in November – and the national judging commences. The national winners will be announced at the final celebratory dinner in the series, on Thursday 23 November in Sydney.

The national event this year will also include the national apprentice awards.

The apprentice finalists will present their projects on the day before, and the day of, the national event, and winners will be announced on the night.

A huge amount of work goes into these events across the country each year and we would therefore like to thank all those members and apprentices who take the time to submit projects. We wish them the best of luck for 2017. And of course, without the support of our sponsors across the country, these events would not be possible.

So maybe this could be your first year as a participant? All you have to do is call your state chapter and they will talk you through the process. It could be great PR for your company too!

The Port Douglas conference

Finally I would like to remind everyone that now is the time to book for the 2017 NECA Electro-Technology Conference, to be held in Port Douglas in July.

We have had a great response to date and once we sell the last of our 'committed rooms' the price could rise.

Fortunately, for most people flights are still looking good. Cairns is very well serviced from Sydney and Melbourne in particular. But it is a case of supply and demand so prices could go up if flights start filling up. So the key message is: book now to avoid higher prices and /or disappointment! I am sure it will be a great event, and our best conference so far.

I look forward to seeing you there. ■

Best regards,
Suresh Manickam

Electrical Innovative Delivery and Pathways Project for Apprentices: Update



During 2016, NECA embarked on the *Electrical Innovative Delivery & Pathways Project* (referred to as the Alternative Pathways Project, or APP). This project is supported by the Federal Government's *Australian Apprenticeship Program - Alternative Delivery Pilots*.

NECA believes that for our industry to continue to be successful and relevant, we must continue to innovate and be more efficient. NECA has taken a leading position, in conjunction with the Federal Government, in the development of training programs through the APP program.

This Pilot is operating 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 is critical to know that NECA is committed to retaining the on- and off-the-job training rigour in the current system to ensure training outcomes continue to be appropriate for obtaining a licence under electrical safety legislation to safeguard workers and the community.

Project providers

A range of different providers has been chosen across different jurisdictions to maximise

the scope of the trials and to assist NECA in delivering four core activities:

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

These four core activity areas are:

- Training relevance to industry needs.
- Training for new business opportunities.
- Attracting new and diversified entrants.
- Workplace support and its effectiveness.

The initiatives that will be trialled

Within the four core activities there are nine programs that are being developed and trialled to address critical issues needing attention in skills development and training approaches in the highly regulated electrical and communications industry. Each initiative is being developed in consultation with partner providers, i.e. NECA, relevant government departments and employers. These nine programs are:

- Pre-apprenticeships and focussed on-the-job and off-the-job skills training.
- Expanding customised training for employers with partner providers.
- Examining current practices and developing resources for better targeted simulated training for partner providers.

To put this issue into context we reiterate the following crucial points in relation to a Certificate III in Electrotechnology

NECA supports:

- pre-apprenticeship programs to ensure sufficient numbers of literate and numerate applicants enter the industry;
- courses that are a combination of on-the-job and off-the-job training.

These are underpinned by an agreement in a competency-based system where the training contract is formulated through discussion with the employer, apprentice and Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and meets the needs of all parties involved:

- the completion of 'electrical work' by employees with Certificate III qualifications and the relevant workers licence;
- theoretical training taught as part of the Certificate III and taught by an RTO; and,
- blended learning, facilitated by an RTO.

However NECA does not support:

- a two-year apprenticeship; nor
- fully-institutionalised training.

- Developing pathways, resources and trialling training under energy efficient technologies.
- Operationalising a national industry endorsed and available Readiness Assessment tool which assists recruitment and identifies literacy and numeracy needs and trials a related course.
- Trial innovative approaches to increase the number of women into the industry.
- Developing more streamlined resources and pathways for Adult Apprenticeship Pathways, particularly for those with some relevant experience.
- Developing and implementing nationally consistent and effective Capstone assessment arrangements
- Developing and trialling a course for apprentice mentor/supervisors.

Jakeb Solley, NECA National Apprentice of the Year (Communications)

Jakeb Solley is one of our three 2016 National Apprentice of the Year Award winners.

Following the National Apprentice Awards in Canberra in November, where Jakeb was the national winner in the Communications category, Barry Jackson from NECA caught up with him to find out a little bit more about what made him choose the Electrotechnology industry as his career.

Q. What made you become an electrical apprentice?

A. Early on in life I realised how much I enjoyed using both my hands and my head to achieve an outcome. Plus my uncle was an electrician and helping him gave me good exposure to the industry at an early age. So I set my mind on becoming an apprentice.

Q. Was the four-year training experience what you were expecting?

A. The training experience was more or less how I had pictured it would be. But there were some surprises along the way. The leap between the 2nd and 3rd years was when I felt I had found my feet and I started to feel less like an apprentice, and more like a worker. In regards to the training, PEER do a great job at delivering the material at an appropriate time. So the bookwork was pretty straight forward and easy to manage.

Q. Any particular highs (and/or lows)?

A. One of the most memorable highs would have to have been completing a major construction job (Tonsley TAFE) from start to finish. I feel like this gave me the exposure a lot of apprentices miss out on.

Q. If you were the head of NECA's GTO/RTO what changes (if any) would you like to see in the apprenticeship training and on-the-job work experience?

A. I think the whole industry would benefit from apprentices gaining more experience across the board - domestic, industrial and commercial. I know this



isn't always easy, and I appreciate the logistical reasons why not all apprentices can move around as easily as I could. But maybe NECA could run workshops on each area to make up for any missed experience!

Q. How would you encourage more females to become apprentices?

A. I was lucky enough to have worked with a number of fantastic female apprentices, and it has made me realise that there really isn't any stigma around females working in the industry - contrary to popular beliefs. I just think it's an old-school idea and I would love to see that message shared with more females looking at getting into the industry. I think it would give them the confidence, and reassurance, that it's nowhere near as male-dominated as you may think.

Q. How did you find completing the project and the interviews to get to the finals?

A. I enjoyed working on the project. There were a few small administrative issues that had me scratching my head. And flying over to Melbourne was super stressful. But once I was in the room with

the judging panel and I saw how relaxed they were, it made it a lot easier to present well - and with confidence.

Q. Do you still manage to keep a good balance between work and fun (sport/ interests etc.)?

A. I would like to believe I do. My employer (Adelaide Health Tech) has a fantastic culture that stresses the importance of time outside of work, and enjoying life. I play football, golf and love fishing. Gives me plenty of time to wind down from a busy or stressful week. Testament to the encouragement of AHT.

Q. Where to from here (life and career)?

A. From here I would love to continue growing with AHT. There are plenty of opportunities in front of me and not once has a suggestion for further education been dismissed. I'd like to up-skill into security and automation which would give me, and the company I hope, more to offer our clients. Further into the future I can see myself in a project management, or estimating job, but I'd need more experience under my belt to make that move. I've got plenty of mileage to go at AHT, and I'm in no rush.

JOIN US IN

Port Douglas!

FOR THE



Our great program includes terrific speakers, unique tropical excursions and fantastic optional activities which feature the wonders of Far North Queensland.

REGISTRATION ENQUIRIES:

Find out more online at the event website:

www.necaconference2017.com.au

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