

25 March 2020

The Honourable Josh Frydenberg MP  
Treasurer of Australia  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer,

### **Unprecedented measures for unprecedented times**

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA), the peak industry body for Australia's electrical and communications contracting industry, which employs more than 165,000 workers and delivers an annual turnover in excess of \$23 billion. We represent the best interests of over 5,200 electrical contracting businesses across all Australian States and Territories.

NECA members make an integral contribution to Australia's economy. Our members are essential from any defining aspect, including: connecting hospitals, communities, schools, businesses and infrastructure across the country. From installing solar infrastructure and batteries for households, to connecting solar farms to the grid and undertaking millions of hours of electrical work on major infrastructure.

I say without exaggeration that without the skills and contribution of our sector, Australia would simply not be connected and part of the modern age.

At the outset, the government should be congratulated for recognizing and responding to the unprecedented crisis before us. That said, we urge you to consider the views and input of industry, as we are best placed to speak with authority, and experience to provide workable alternatives.

Like all industries, the electrical and communications contracting industries face unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 crisis. We understand this is your

#### **NATIONAL OFFICE**

Level 4,  
30 Atchison Street,  
St Leonards NSW 2065  
Locked Bag 1818,  
St Leonards NSW 1590

**T** +61 2 9439 8523  
**F** +61 2 9439 8525  
**E** [necanat@neca.asn.au](mailto:necanat@neca.asn.au)  
**W** [www.neca.asn.au](http://www.neca.asn.au)

ABN 78 319 016 742



Government's current priority and want to outline policy proposals that will help to protect businesses and jobs, and support the Australian economy as it rebuilds after this crisis.

We urge you to:

- adopt and employ a holistic approach to supporting apprentices. To this end the recently announced wage subsidy of 50% for apprentice's and trainee's wages that will be made available to small employers should be extended immediately to medium and large employers large employers including group training organisations;
- swiftly act to confirm that the construction and maintenance of electrical and communications installations is an 'essential service' at all levels of Government;
- expedite repair and maintenance, or energy efficiency upgrades, especially in Government buildings that may be unoccupied, such as universities or schools that are subject to closures. All Governments should immediately initiate energy efficient and solar upgrades to Government buildings in time for their reoccupation;
- task all States and Territories to immediately abolish all payroll tax provisions. If the intent of Government is to build and boost the economy, any form of payroll tax is both counter-intuitive and counter-productive and will only serve to impede growth;
- task all States and Territories to immediately adopt one effective single uniformed approach to security of payments. Moreover, that the legislation must clearly ensure that sub-contractors are to be paid in a timely manner and are to be no longer treated as de facto financiers;
- immediately address the detrimental effects of unscrupulous principal contractors who seek to enforce unfair contracts on a 'take-it or leave-it' basis by shifting risk. Unfair contract provisions need to urgently address the transfer of risk from a principal contractor to a sub-contractor, particularly in light of the global health crisis and the viability of businesses;
- treat Saturdays and Sundays as normal working days, such that shifts can be staggered to allowed for a reduction in the number of people on site at any one time. Further, that normal hours in a working day be expanded between 5am and 9pm to allow for two shifts of ordinary hours in a normal working day;



- postpone the next scheduled rise to the Superannuation Guarantee levy for at least 2 years in order to assist recovering businesses; and
- invest in infrastructure and construction projects that will keep industry productive and protect jobs.

We appreciate your support for these measures as we work together to manage the immediate impact of this crisis and in rebuilding Australian's economy.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Manickam', is written over a horizontal line.

Suresh Manickam  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**National Electrical and Communications Association**

CC:

The Hon. Dominic Perrottet, MP  
Treasurer of New South Wales  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

The Hon. Jackie Trad, MP  
Treasurer of Queensland  
PO Box 15185  
CITY EAST QLD 4002

The Hon. Tim Pallas, MP  
Treasurer of Victoria  
Level 1, 1 Treasury Place  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

The Hon. Rob Lucas, MP  
Treasurer of South Australia  
GPO Box 2343  
ADELAIDE SA 5001



The Hon. Ben Wyatt, MP  
Treasurer of Western Australia  
Department of the Premier and Cabinet  
2 Havelock Street WEST PERTH WA 6005

The Hon. Peter Gutwein, MP  
Treasurer of Tasmania  
Level I, 15 Murray Street  
HOBART TAS 7000

The Hon. Nicole Manison, MP  
Treasurer of the Northern Territory  
GPO Box 3146  
DARWIN NT 0800

The Hon. Andrew Bar, MLA  
Treasurer of the Australian Capital Territory  
GPO Box 1020  
CANBERRA ACT 260