

A STRONG INDUSTRY VOICE FOR ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS

With the Federal election now over, NECA will continue to work closely with the re-elected Morrison government to ensure it recognises the industry's critical role and implements effective policy so electrical contracting businesses can thrive.

With the large majority of electrical contractors being small, family-owned businesses, we have placed a high priority on addressing the challenges facing small business. These include boosting security of payments and reducing contractors' risk of disadvantage and financial loss if a lead contractor falls into receivership. We are also advocating for a reduction across all areas of red tape and improved tax relief, including instant asset write offs and tax concessions. Improvements in all these areas will be a welcome benefit for smaller contractors whose businesses are the backbone of the Australian economy and make an important contribution to local communities.

For businesses to grow and prosper, it is essential that there is continued economic expansion across all states and to this end NECA is encouraging government's investment in infrastructure projects. These projects will require a significant amount of electrical work and are key to creating jobs, boosting economic growth and ensuring Australia's success and prosperity.

Underpinning industry growth is the need for a skilled and qualified workforce, which is supported by quality education and training. Skills shortages are already challenging the industry and will become an increasing issue as the economy grows. Over the past ten years there has been an overall decrease in the number of apprentices being employed and we urgently need measures in place to correct this. We are strongly advocating for improved funding for the trade system and systems that make it easier for businesses to



employ apprentices and trainees. We are also looking to promote training so that its value to the wider economy is recognised.

Another key element is helping to make school students [and their parents] aware of their available career path options. We also need to inform female students that there are equal opportunities within our trade. We're aware there's a community perception that apprenticeships are a 'last resort' option when someone can't get into university; however, the electrical industry offers a large and diverse range of opportunities that compare positively with university careers. We are working to position apprenticeships as a first-choice career option that offers high employment outcomes and the potential for a successful career.

Over the past few years we have seen the value in a workplace system that is fair to both employees and employers. The Australian Building and Construction

Commission (ABCC) has an important role as the 'independent cop on the beat' and having successfully advocated for its reinstatement, we will continue to support its ongoing operations.

These are just some of the areas where NECA is providing a strong voice for members and working to support them in their business endeavours. NECA is fortunate to have positive relationships with all political parties as well as a broad range of industry stakeholders. We will continue to foster those relationships in order to advance the electrical industry on behalf of members.

Our thanks to all our members for their ongoing support for NECA and our industry. By collaborating, we can achieve meaningful outcomes for our industry that would not otherwise be possible.



Suresh Manickam
CEO, National Electrical
and Communications
Association

CROSSING OVER TO CABLING WITHOUT THE RISK

ACRS receives many enquiries from electricians who are looking to diversify their skills and include cabling related services into their business. In particular, to take advantage of the growing trend to smart wiring, and cabling projects associated with the nbn™.

Becoming a registered Open cabler allows an electrician to work legally as an Australian Communications and Media Authority [ACMA] accredited cabler. This means being able to cross over into the telecommunications cabling industry with permission to install, modify and repair phone and data cables, data points, patch panels and other devices within residential and commercial areas.

For example, only registered cablers can perform in-home cabling work for a home or business owner connecting to the nbn™ access network.

Regardless of the size or scale of cabling involved in a project, it's important for contractors to be aware that any unregistered cabling work that is faulty or results in an incident, is not covered by business insurance – a risk that's not worth taking.

Crossing over to cabling is a fairly straight-forward process for any licenced electrician who can complete the relevant ACMA pathway training through a registered training organisation, such as a NECA training centre.

Visit the ACRS website www.acrs.com.au or call 1300 667 771 for a national list of registered training organisations.



HIRING AN APPRENTICE? START WITH A PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

One of the best ways to recruit an apprentice is to start with graduates of a pre-apprenticeship program. Not only do you have the opportunity to see a pre-apprentice in action, the pre-apprentice has an opportunity to engage in routine electrotechnology work and find out if the life of an electrician is really the right choice for them.

What to look for in a Pre-Apprenticeship program?

No two pre-apprenticeship programs are the same. When considering a pre-apprenticeship program through a Registered Training Organisation [RTO], look for a program that meets the following criteria:

- underpinned by genuine work-based learning opportunities;
- driven by high quality training which makes graduates work and apprenticeship ready;
- developed and delivered through direct engagement with employers and industry;
- responsive to local skill demands;
- linked to job opportunities and employment outcomes, and
- adequately funded, with relevant length and sequencing whether part or full time.

Getting a head start

An electrical pre-apprenticeship gives potential apprentices a head-start on the pathway to an apprenticeship. Generally based on the national qualification - *UEE22011 Certificate II in Electrotechnology*, these qualifications enable participants to develop broad-based competencies in a range of electrotechnology fields, such as lighting, general power, fire protection and security, robotics, instrumentation, optical data and voice systems, electrical motors and control systems.

There is also a focus on workshop practices and hand skills, electrical wiring and equipment, electrical



drawing, electrical regulations, test instruments, communications skills, computer software applications, applied electricity and workplace safety.

What to look for in an Apprentice?

An electrical apprenticeship isn't for everyone, and it's better for a pre-apprentice to know that sooner rather than later.

The first thing to look for in a pre-apprentice student is the capacity to undertake the training. This means having a solid grasp on the types of language used on the job and the mathematical skills needed to perform practical calculations.

Equally important is the motivation to pursue a career in the electrical trade. This is not just saying that they want to be an electrician but understanding what the job is about. Early mornings, some weekend work and being on your feet all day isn't for everyone.

Why it's important to get it right

The people that work with you have the potential to make or break your business. An apprentice is no different. In fact, as one of the younger members of your team they will be the face of your business on site. Getting the right apprentices and having the opportunity to try them out through a pre-apprenticeship is good recruitment practice.