



national
electrical and
communications
association

Electrical Innovative Delivery and Pathways Projects



A National Roadmap to increase
recruitment and retention of women
in electrical apprenticeships

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I. About NECA

The National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA) is the peak body for the electrical and communications sector in Australia. The sector employs over 165,000 workers and maintains an annual turnover in excess of \$23 billion.

NECA represents approximately 5,000 electrical contracting businesses across all Australian states and territories.

We help our members, and the wider industry, to operate and manage their businesses more effectively with advice and support while we represent their interests to the Federal and individual state and territory Governments, regulators and principal industry bodies such as the Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI) and Standards Australia.

Working with our partner Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Group Training Organisations (GTOs), NECA provides employment and ongoing skills development for approximately 4,800 apprentices across Australia. The majority of these apprentices get the opportunity to gain work experience with NECA's members through our group schemes.

Our training arm delivers training options for an additional 4,000 qualified electricians across the industry, providing technical advice and business skills training along with business development and marketing training for managers.

NECA also manages and promotes the industry-wide annual Excellence and Apprentice Awards, a student scholarship program, the NECA Foundation and the Alternative Pathways Project.

Our chapters

NECA first commenced operations in 1916 and its strength and influence within the industry is evidenced by our state-based chapter structure across Australia,

While much has changed since our early days, NECA continues to work hard to represent the interests of the industry and to develop a diverse range of products and services for our members across Australia.

2. The Electrical Innovative Delivery and Pathways Project

Overview

The Australian Federal Government is establishing a series of industry-led pilots within its Australian Apprenticeship Program – Alternative Delivery Pilots, to test and open up alternative training approaches on a broader scale, providing greater skills development, choice and industry acceptance.

NECA's Alternative Delivery Pilot Project (The Project) will operate across Australia from July 2016–2018 and be delivered by public and private sector training partners across the electrical contracting sector.

The Project will explore opportunities to encourage broader skills development approaches to facilitate entry level and qualified tradespeople's entry into the sector while examining 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 consultation with electrical contractors.
- » Apprentice Productivity Project – which examined potential gains for 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.

The Project will test and evaluate the essential elements of alternate delivery models (to be designed from industry experience) across four core activity areas with a number of programs in each area.

Partner Providers

A range of different providers has been chosen to maximise the scope of the trials and to assist NECA in delivering the four core activities in different parts of Australia:

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

Core Activity Area

Programs

Training relevance to industry need

1. Apprenticeships and focused off- and on-the job training.
2. Expanding customised training for employers with Partner Providers.
3. Examining current practices and developing resources for better targeted, simulated training for Partner Providers.

Training for new business opportunities

4. Developing training pathways resources and trialling training under energy efficient technologies.

Attracting New and Diversified Entrance

5. Operationalising a national, industry endorsed and available Readiness Assessment tool which assists recruitment and identifies literacy and numeracy needs in order to trial a related course.
6. Trialling innovative approaches to increase the number of and outcomes for women entering the industry.
7. Developing more streamlined resources and options for Adult Apprenticeship Pathways particularly for those with some relevant experience.

Workplace support and effectiveness

8. Developing and implementing nationally consistent and effective Capstone assessment arrangements.
9. Developing and trialling a course for apprentice mentors/supervisors.

3. Background

This National Roadmap (Roadmap) has been prepared as a resource to encourage continued discussion and engagement around strategies to increase the attraction, recruitment and retention of women in electrical apprenticeships.

The Roadmap is an outcome of work undertaken as part of The National Electrical and Communications Association's (NECA) Electrical Innovative Delivery and Pathways Project. Specifically, the Women in Electrical Trades Program (Program), established to investigate support strategies and innovative approaches to increase the number of, and outcomes for, women in the electrotechnology sector. The Program examined the barriers women face in the electrical trades and gathered recommendations for initiatives to help attract and retain women.

To develop these recommendations, representatives from industry, employers and providers were brought together with women currently in the industry for a series of facilitated discussions with the goal of creating a national plan for all stakeholders.

To correspond with the multi-dimensional issues of women in the electrical industry we took a multi-dimensional approach:

- » An initial scan of existing research helped identify issues in attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing women in male dominated industries and developed strategies to address these.
- » Undertaking work through NECA including qualitative interviews with women in all stages of the apprenticeship cycle including pre-apprentices, apprentices and women with over 20 years' industry experience. Their feedback was used to prepare a communication strategy to promote the trade using case studies, female ambassadors, success stories from NECA's female apprentice graduates, and testimonials from employers who have successfully recruited and supported female apprentices.
- » Engaging NECA WA Electrical Group Training (EGT) to build on the local initiatives they use to encourage women into the trade, and to help develop strategies to provide training, employment and career support over a 12 month period to a group of female apprentices undertaking or completing their electrical trade apprenticeship.
- » Using EGT reporting to understand the effectiveness of strategies that help support female apprentices in the electrical trades including pre- and post- apprenticeship support and the use of specialist external organisations.
- » Undertaking a review of Partner Provider (and associated GTO where they exist) strategies for attracting, recruiting and retaining females in the electrical trades and analysing their responses to identify and document potential new strategies and program options.

Research findings

The research shows that women are currently an under-utilised resource within the electrotechnology sector.

With unprecedented activity in the sector combined with the current and predicted future labour shortages, it's critically important to address the challenges of successfully attracting, recruiting and retaining women in electrical careers.

The information collected has informed both the Roadmap and NECA's approach to workforce challenges relating to female participation in the sector beyond the pilot. This includes strategies to improve attraction and recruitment tailored to the sector's unique culture and workforce with a focus on improving both supply and demand. Strategies will be targeted at both female entrants/employees and the existing workforce and management.

The Roadmap aims to provide practical and effective suggestions and enliven public discussion in order to address key issues for the industry going forward.

Stakeholders will be encouraged to share their views on which strategies are working, or not, and their ideas on new strategies that can be developed.



4. Understanding barriers to reaching and recruiting women to electrical apprenticeships

In order to successfully reach out to women and help them become electrical apprentices, it's important to first understand the barriers that are preventing them from entering an apprenticeship.

There are many barriers and challenges for women in the electrotechnology sector with the most common found by the research including:

- » Stereotypes, sexism and perception of women on the job site
- » A lack of information available about the trade as a career option
- » Difficulty with work/life balance
- » The male dominated environment
- » Breaking down the 'old boys' network
- » Lack of mentoring programs and networks for women.

Barriers to entry

Women aren't told, or don't know about, electrical jobs and apprenticeship opportunities

There is a lack of awareness of the opportunities and career paths available within the electrotechnology sector. Young women aren't applying for electrical apprenticeships because they don't know this career option even exists.

Official sources such as career counsellors and school guidance counsellors don't steer girls towards opportunities in the electrical trades. There needs to be a major change in mindset which will take time to address as it's not only the young women who are unaware of the opportunities the industry can offer – their mothers and teachers are also generally unaware. Mothers and teachers, who don't understand the benefits and financial remuneration available, emerged as the biggest barrier preventing young women entering the electrotechnology sector.

Women are (typically) less prepared for entry level electrical trades and so seen as less competitive applicants for apprenticeships

- » The bias starts at school with career decisions reinforced by the educational choices made during school and post-secondary education. Young women aren't reached early enough to encourage them down the electrical path. It's clear we need to get into schools much earlier to help females realise this is an option for them, it's not just a career for males.
- » The majority of women entering the industry are entering it as a second career, and are generally mature age students. Females aren't exposed to career paths in the electrotechnology industry as early or as often as males.
- » There is a lack of family role models with females less likely than males to benefit from their father's trades knowledge. Career guidance from fathers, brothers and male in-laws is generally directed towards male family members and friends meaning these opportunities are hidden from females. Women are more likely hear about electrical trade opportunities in formal settings, such as recruitment information sessions, than from the more in-depth, personal connections and conversations that may be made among males.

Stereotypes about electrical trade careers prevent women from seeking employment

- » There is a negative perception and lack of awareness about electrotechnology – even with the right education and exposure relatively few women are choosing to consider and apply for roles within the sector. Part of the reason is a negative perception of the industry, or anecdotal feedback from others about a negative experience.

- » Male dominated trades are perceived to have a masculine or 'blokey' workplace culture that is non-inclusive for women and has a higher tolerance of behaviours that could be viewed as sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination. This leads to a perception that jobs within these trades would be a challenge at every stage of a career, not just entry level. Most predictable on-site gender-based behaviour is actually more manageable than we initially imagined. While gender-discrimination is evident, it isn't the issue we feared it might be. Most of the women we spoke to during the research admitted it could be draining but they also understood they are still to a great extent "pioneers in a man's world."

Electrical trades aren't marketed to women so they don't know these careers are for them

- » It doesn't appear that organisations within the industry are addressing the stereotypes and myths about women in the workplace, the assumptions about the sort of work women can do, the work they have the skills to do, their potential performance and their commitment to their careers. These stereotypes and myths about the roles women should do tend to exclude women from recruitment and development activities in the electrotechnology sector.
- » Job advertisements depicting electrical trade workers rarely feature women, so women assume the jobs aren't meant for them. Women aren't directly invited to apply for jobs by trade employers either.

5. Strategies and program options

To address these barriers and challenges we explored a range of strategies and options.

Recommendations that were put forward generally focused on:

- » **Innovative engagement and support measures to increase the number of, and outcomes for, women in the industry.**
- » **Strategies that encourage young women to undertake and complete electrical apprenticeships.**
- » **Strategies for promoting women in the electrical trade to the general public and industry.**

The most popular recommendation to attract women to the trade was the dissemination of more information to both young and mature age women. Customised information on apprenticeships, employment, and training opportunities for females was seen as critical. Women need to know that the electrical trade is an option for them. The best way to accomplish this is for employers and female role models from the trade to visit high schools and to attend career events.

Once a woman joins an apprenticeship program, progression through each level needs to be supported by employers. Models for supporting women in the workplace must include the hands-on teaching, training, mentoring and monitoring role performed by employers who supervise women apprentices.

To address every single barrier and challenge identified, the solution is to get more women onto work sites to support the women already working there, to balance out the male dominated environment and to break down the old boys' network.

Once more women are on work sites, further measures can be taken to ensure they are retained through the creation of women's networks and mentorship programs, and through better access to educational and career advancement opportunities. It was clear from the feedback that women benefit greatly from meeting other tradeswomen and apprentices and being able to share experiences.

Action areas

Based on the feedback received, we've prioritised the strategies and Program options into four Action Areas for the sector to address:

1. *Actions targeting schools* – to get electrical trades training on young women's' career radar and to ease their pathway into an apprenticeship.
2. *Actions targeting the workplace* – employers and peak bodies to promote females in electrical apprenticeships as a key workforce supply opportunity.

3. *Actions to challenge attitudes and perceptions* – initiating awareness campaigns in the community that target:
 - a. Key influencers around young women, particularly parents, boyfriends, partners and other male peers, to increase support or reduce opposition to the option of an electrical trade career.
 - b. Men working in traditional trades, to promote the acceptance of women in male dominated workplaces.
 - c. Young women with a profile likely to have the attitude and aptitude to succeed in an electrical trade, to get the option of an apprenticeship on their radar.
4. *Action to provide specific support for the training of female apprentices* – providing avenues for women to meet other tradeswomen and apprentices and establishing networks of support and encouragement for those in the industry. Enhancing the workplace training and mentoring roles of training providers and employers who supervise women and apprentices in the workplace.



6. Structure and purpose of the Roadmap

The National Roadmap has been prepared to:

- » **Assist in the recruitment of more women to electrical trade careers**
- » **Help all females who are interested in an electrical trade career learn more about apprenticeship opportunities**
- » **Provide current apprentices with resources to support their long-term success in the trades.**

The overall purpose of the Roadmap is to inform and guide further investment in this area by the electrotechnology sector. It has been designed to help the industry, and its stakeholders, to develop and implement sustainable strategies to increase the representation of women in a non-traditional role in a male-dominated industry.

The Roadmap highlights the success of women in the electrical trades and outlines strategies and program options to help move towards a better balance of male and female workers across the sector.

It's designed to help employers, contractors, apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training providers and other industry stakeholders improve their outreach, recruitment, training, and retention of skilled female electrical trades' workers.

The intention is to provide a more strategic, prioritised approach to address current issues and support transparent decisions based on an in-depth analysis of current programs and services.

The Roadmap will promote female participation in the electrical trades and provide opportunities for key stakeholders to work together to further strengthen the actions that can be taken and the results achieved in attracting, recruiting and retaining women in the electrical trades.

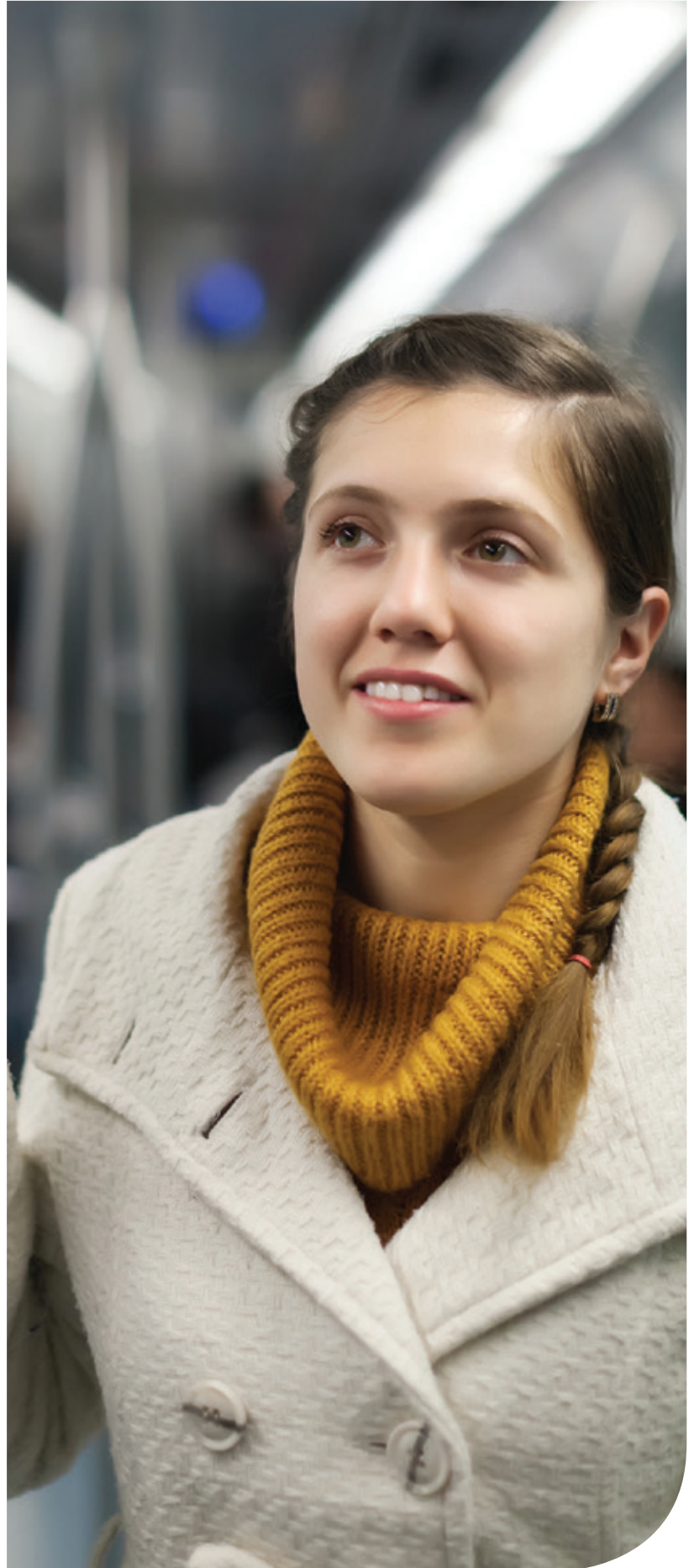
It will be used to identify gaps in services, support capacity and information sharing and, where relevant, to identify new and innovative opportunities for investment. Users will be enabled to:

- » Analyse the current issues in the context of the gender gap in the electrotechnology workforce and provide responses and strategies on how best to address these gaps.
- » Identify key areas to focus on to advance gender equality (the Action Areas).
- » Identify and scope implementation partners to engage with.

Understand how NECA can best support these partnerships to increase the number of women in electrical apprenticeships.

- » Formulate recommendations with key guiding questions to assist decision making on potential areas of investment and the rationale for those investments.
- » Identify whether, and how, local programs and activities can be replicated, leveraged and scaled up.

The Roadmap will be widely communicated and available on stakeholder websites.



Strategies Framework

Outlines strategies and options for attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing women into electrical trade apprenticeships and key responses that can be undertaken in each of the four Action Areas.

Strategies for Attraction

This section details approaches to enable women to consider and apply for opportunities within the electrotechnology industry, including ways to:

- » Create positive perceptions of the industry that make the sector or workplace attractive to potential women employees and their influencers.
- » Promote the benefits and career opportunities that exist within the sector.

Strategies for Recruitment

Approaches and strategies that consider how to use recruitment mechanisms and processes to address negative perceptions about the industry, including approaches to better understand the barriers that have prevented women from entering electrical apprenticeships in the past. This will include approaches for:

- » Setting and meeting recruitment goals for women
- » Evaluating the messages sent to women
- » Reviewing advertising (brochures, fliers, advertisements and annual reports) to ensure women are used in the images
- » Developing an effective outreach plan and recruitment campaign that features images of women working in the trade.

Strategies for Retention and Development

Provides approaches that will increase the chances that a woman will stay in their apprenticeship and be successful in her trade, including:










- » Building capacity to embed diversity and flexibility
- » Encouraging workplace support for women




- » Helping women connect with others who support their career decision which can help them stick with the program even when difficulties arise
- » Training, both in the classroom and on-the-job, to enhance a woman's ability to do her job
- » Ensuring women are accessing the development required to reach their career potential within the organisation.

National Roadmap Strategies Framework

The Strategy Framework informs and guides future investments across the four critical Action Areas with practical suggestions and examples of the different types of workplace strategies that have emerged through the Research.

The following table shows where these should be developed by employers, peak bodies, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Group Training Organisations (GTOs).

	Strategies for Attraction	Strategies for Recruitment	Strategies for Retention and Development
Key Action Area 1 Actions targeting schools			
Key Action Area 2 Actions targeting the workplace			
Key Action Area 3 Actions to challenge attitudes and perceptions			
Key Action Area 4 Actions to provide specific support for the training of female apprentices			

-  Actions by NECA
-  Actions by Providers/GTOs
-  Actions by Employers

Attracting women to the electrical trade

Key Action Area 1 – Actions targeting schools

Strategies for attraction

● Actions by NECA

- » Establish a national communication strategy to engage with secondary schools to raise awareness of opportunities for young women.
- » Promote the idea of women in the electrical trades to all high school career counsellors. Launch an email campaign to all high school career counsellors outlining the benefits of encouraging young women to go into the trade and send out Women in Trades promotional DVDs.
- » Establish a national strategy that promotes educator awareness of the various career opportunities within the electrotechnology industry as well as the skills necessary to pursue them. The aim is to get teachers to inspire young women to consider electrical career paths.
- » Develop a campaign to market the benefits of going into the electrical trade to young women (aimed at school years 9 and 10). The aim should be to make young women aware that the electrical trade is a possibility for them in the future. This should include providing video resources and a Tool Box Presentation for young women in this target group.
- » Strengthen promotional programs aimed at encouraging young women to take trade classes in school. Direct funding for a campaign highlighting success stories of women working in electrical trades towards part of a larger marketing campaign.
- » Put resources towards the creation of a standard presentation highlighting women in electrical trades.
- » Disseminate more information about available roles and what it's like to work in the electrical trade. Provide information about the challenges that women will face working in the electrical trades but don't instil fear. Promote opportunities to try new things.
- » Advertise the trade to young women through a marketing campaign that showcases women in the electrical trades.

● Actions by providers/GTOs

- » Engage with secondary schools to raise awareness of opportunities for young women.
- » Meet with Careers Advisers at local high schools to develop on-site female work experience days.
- » Organise internships, work experience, final year projects and scholarships so young women can directly experience what it is like to work within the industry.
- » Get female employees in the trade to speak to female students to help influence career decisions.
- » Promote the opportunities available after the apprenticeship program to reassure women that a long term career is available and encouraged.
- » Develop a 'Try-a-trade' session exclusive to young women in school years 9 and 10.
- » Target female school students (possibly via sponsorships) who play sports like AFL, rugby and cricket and who take part in activities such as motorbike racing and rock-climbing.
- » Amend trades class curriculums to include a visit from a female electrician. Build partnerships with employers to facilitate visits by female electrical tradeswomen to classrooms, especially at girls' schools. Engage with employers to fund their tradeswomen to go into schools. In partnership with employers, develop a speaker's network of electrical tradeswomen available to speak in schools. In partnership with employers create a standard presentation outline for all speakers.

● Actions by employers

- » Establish external communication strategies that include:
 - Giving presentations in schools about working in the trade - incorporate a stronger message marketing the trade in presentations.
 - Promoting companies as female friendly employers that value equal opportunity when going to schools with speakers, advertising at career events, and posting job ads.

Strategies for recruitment

● Actions by providers/GTOs

- » Establish orientations, internships and job shadowing opportunities to enable young women to learn what it would be like to work in a particular trade before applying for an apprenticeship.
- » Hold orientation sessions as an ideal way to introduce young women unfamiliar with apprenticeships to the opportunities that exist. The orientation should clearly explain the requirements of an electrical apprenticeship and provide basic information about apprenticeship opportunities in the region.

It's also an opportunity to dispel myths about the work, counter negative stereotypes, and inspire women to see the great possibilities afforded by a career in the electrical trades.



Attracting women to the electrical trade

Key Action Area 2

– Actions targeting the workplace

Strategies for attraction

● Actions by employers

- » Provide a female contact to give potential female applicants the opportunity to ask questions of women employed in electrical roles.
- » Display diverse images and use inclusive language and other visual cues in job advertisements to attract women to non-traditional roles.
- » Position advertisements broadly and where women will notice them including in fitness centres, in print media, on internet sites and the online forums women regularly access.

Strategies for recruitment

● Actions by NECA

- » Incentivise the bigger employers to take on more female apprentices.
- » Create a job register of female-friendly employers to help women find apprenticeships and post-qualification jobs in supportive environments.

● Actions by employers

- » Establish recruitment targets for women.
- » Train recruiters to recognise stereotypes and unconscious bias about the sort of work women can do and the myths about women in non-traditional roles.
- » Offer women the opportunity to display their skills during the recruitment process.
- » Offer an induction program and buddy system that starts from the job offer stage and helps women form relationships, build networks and transition successfully.
- » Change the language in the recruitment process from being too male-oriented, re-developing selection criteria, making the group assessment process more inclusive, including women on interview panels.

Strategies for retention and development

● Actions by NECA

- » Extend and create workplace and industry-wide networking opportunities to address the fact that women traditionally have less access to these opportunities.

● Actions by providers/GTOs

- » Establish a mentoring program as a key element in keeping more women in the program. Women can be matched with an experienced tradeswoman who answers their questions, shares advice and is supportive of women entering the trade.
- » Have a 'point person' who female apprentices can go to for help in navigating the apprenticeship system.
- » Create a clear way for apprentices to get help for issues or concerns and to connect female apprentices to appropriate supportive services.
- » Establish support groups as a way for women in the trade to realise they are not alone, to get advice on problems and to share their successes.

● Actions by employers

- » Design appropriate workplace training initiatives for women in organisations.
- » Monitor inconsistent work practices for female apprentices.
- » Share stories of successful women in the organisation – personal career highlights and the development they have undertaken to be successful in non-traditional roles.
- » Review workplace policies and practices to ensure they are family friendly.

- » Become an *Employer of Choice* for Women with a focus on women in electrical trades.
- » Foster relationships and mentoring for female apprentices. Provide mentoring and networking opportunities for women in the workplace. Formal, matched mentoring programs are important for women in non-traditional roles in the workplace and help them to:
 - Build relationships and trust
 - Encourage honest feedback and forthright discussion of career opportunities
 - Enhance mentees' understanding of diverse perspectives and experiences.
- » Sponsor women to ensure their achievements are recognised and they are visible across the organisation.

Attracting women to the electrical trade

Key Action Area 3 – Actions to challenge attitudes and perceptions

Strategies for attraction

● Actions by NECA

- » Feature women prominently on websites and other marketing material displaying diverse images and using inclusive language.
- » Publish profiles and case studies of women in electrical roles to provide role models for potential applicants to relate to and be inspired by.
- » Promote the achievement of individual and corporate awards focused on women to recognise participation and success in leading practice awards.
- » Sponsor awards and awards' events to promote women's accomplishments within electrical roles.
- » Target advertising to the key influencers on young women's career decisions – mothers, friends, career advisors and teachers.
- » Create an Advice Service/ Helpline for women considering a career in the sector, and already working in the sector.

Strategies for recruitment

● Actions by NECA

- » Establish a national campaign targeting women to re-enter the industry or to move to non-traditional roles.



Attracting women to the electrical trade

Key Action Area 4 – Actions to provide specific support for the training of female apprentices

Strategies for recruitment

● Actions by providers/GTOs

- » Embed recruitment goals into training course KPIs.
- » Create recruitment materials with details of how to reach the target audience – identifying key events to recruit women and incorporating women from the industry in classes and training programs to represent the organisation.
- » Use images of women in material and messages to promote training and job opportunities specifically to women.
- » Use local recruitment events to target potential female applicants – career events, school nights for high school students, lunch-time presentations, apprenticeship contests, community events, parent nights etc.
- » Employ women from training courses and trades occupations in outreach roles to serve as role models for potential female applicants for example at recruitment events. Feature them in images, videos, and other visual outreach materials.
- » Create informative materials that describe the steps a woman should take to apply to a training program. Share the materials at outreach events and with women who respond to advertisements. The materials should address the intermediate steps a woman should take if interested in the program, for example, who to talk to, a recruitment or orientation event she should attend, a website to view, short-courses to take etc.
- » Make the path to take to develop skills and qualify for desirable positions visible to women. Create a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Factsheet for women who want to know how to be competitive for the available programs and opportunities addressing:
 - Ways new people enter the industry or classes
 - Details of entry level positions
 - Short courses females could take to get a feel for the sector without having to make a huge time commitment
 - The rung-by-rung career ladders to climb to reach skilled technical positions.

Strategies for retention and development

● Actions by providers/GTOs

- » Ensure that women receive Equitable Skills Training and that employers provide apprentices with the opportunity to learn the technical aspects of the trade on the job.
- » Carefully monitor women to make sure they're not only doing grunt work but are learning practical on-the-job skills that lead to being a valued worker.
- » Offer flexibility in the time and location of training.
- » Develop curriculum resources for an all-female cohort of pre-apprentices.
- » Use tradeswomen role models in training – students will benefit from being taught by experienced electrical tradeswomen.
- » Cultivate and foster leadership and independence in females in class so students can become comfortable taking charge of their task.
- » Give female students challenging tasks – they can benefit tremendously from being challenged.



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