

A word from the CEO

As 2016 is an election year, this will be another busy year at NECA. We are currently reviewing our policies – which you can find on our website (www.neca.asn.au), and we are gearing up to a new round of discussions with all parties, to be sure our key industry issues are front-of-mind with all relevant federal members and senators.

We closed 2015 as usual with our National Excellence Awards - covered in this update, and again congratulate all our winners. We were also pleased to see that the Federal Government's *Higher Education Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Reform) Bill 2015* passed through the Senate in December with the support of the Opposition and minor parties. The new rules, which came into effect on 1 January 2016 provide greater protections for students and seek to increase the standards of the VET sector by stamping out unscrupulous marketing and enrolment practices.

We also concluded the E-Oz EIAMPS pilot project. This pilot project was a huge success and enabled NECA to engage with apprentice employers and other key stakeholders to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the present apprenticeship system in order



to develop future policy. Following these consultations, our *Employer Engagement* policy has now been formulated and will soon be ready for industry-wide distribution. The policy makes a number of recommendations in relation to competency-based progression, the training, support and supervision of apprentices, blended learning models and the development of an industry-led national apprenticeship recruitment register.

With our Does it Comply? partner, we have developed a series of short video clips that highlight the dangers of purchasing non-compliant products and the potential liability that can follow. These are short clips and very easy to relate to. I hope you will take a moment to refresh your knowledge on this continuing

issue. These clips are also on our website.

The planning for our industry conference in South Africa continues to go well. We have now secured all of our main speakers and will be promoting the full program as this issue of *Electrical Connection* arrives on your desk. We have exclusive use of the venue we chose for this event in Stellenbosch – one of South Africa's most spectacular wine regions, and the numbers are looking great. But there are still places available.

We are also excited to be welcoming six winners from the marketing campaign run by our four principal sponsors: Clipsal by Schneider Electric, Gerard Lighting, L&H and NHP. Most of our winners are not NECA members, so I would like to stress that this is an industry conference not just a NECA members' conference. So we would really like to see a broad range of electrical contracting businesses at the conference. For further information – including the final program and principal speakers, check our website.

Finally, I'd just like to wish you a very successful 2016. ■

Best regards,
Suresh Manickam



South Africa 2016

Sunday 17 April to Thursday 21 April

Setting the agenda for the next five years...

If you are interested in how our industry is changing, you can't afford to miss this conference. We have two of Australia's leading industry experts sharing their views on how our industry will be transformed over the next five years. And it's not just about energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. The convergence of electrical control via the internet and traditional wiring is totally changing the landscape for electrical contractors, and consumers.

The program is now finalised. The excursions and entertainment are a wonderful taste of what's on offer in Africa. Plus, we have secured sole-occupancy of our venue to meet the huge demand from our delegates – NECA members and non-members. But there are still places available – if you book now.

Can you afford not to be part of the discussion?
Check it out on www.neca.asn.au

Changing times ahead, part two

In the last issue of *Electrical Connection*, Glenn Platt – who is one of the keynote speakers at our conference in South Africa in April 2016, talked about how our world is changing. This is part two of his article.

Today, solar isn't just cheaper for the end consumer than conventional grid electricity, solar systems are also being used to maintain the reliability of the broader electricity grid. Imagine what this will do to the uptake of this technology across Australia.

Even if our Edison could get his head around the localised generation, storage and reactive power control on the power system of the immediate future, things won't stay this way for long.

Already in Australia trials are under way of microgrids and 'transactional' systems, in which local houses and other buildings essentially trade energy. This provides complete independence from the grid and often improves power quality and reliability.

In doing so, these systems demonstrate that we don't really need base-load power. What's needed is generation carefully matched to supply at any instant.

To achieve this, microgrids are managed by automated controllers that can accurately predict future load and generation, then actively manage loads and energy storage to keep things in balance with the available generation. They do this while maintaining power quality to the end user.

Driven by economics, with the bonus of practical benefits, the uptake of distributed solar and battery storage in Australia is akin to the disruption that digital photography caused to film, or the mobile phone caused to telephony.

Although the approaching changes will be widespread and profound, they aren't anything to be afraid of. On the contrary, they represent a great opportunity for electrical and



Glenn Platt heads up CSIRO's Energy flagship and will be the keynote speaker at the NECA conference in South Africa, next April.

communications contractors.

The new technologies – solar, batteries, energy management systems, and so on – operate on the core electrical and communications principles we are used to. There are additional skills to learn, but it's not an entire change in direction.

These are labour-intensive sectors that can help the economy. The solar industry in the United States employs more people than the coal industry. It even employs more people than Apple, Google, Twitter and Facebook

combined.

Large investment banks such as Morgan Stanley and UBS (not exactly crazy greenies or renewable energy zealots) are publishing papers on how they expect solar and batteries to be a huge industry over the next few years.

For example, Morgan Stanley predicts that about 2.4 million Australian homes will install solar and battery systems, with a payback time to the household of less than 10 years. Ultimately, this means more work, more challenges, and more opportunities for our industry.

Somehow I think Edison would have been a bit disappointed if he had come back and recognised so much of our electricity system so many years on from his initial inventions. However, if he knew about the huge changes just around the corner, I think he'd be excited for us all.

Edison once said: "Everything comes to him who hustles while he waits ..."

Exciting times are ahead – hustle on, I say.

To read this article in full, please go to "News & views" on the NECA website www.neca.asn.au



2015 NECA National Excellence Awards



The nation's best electrical and communications projects have been recognised at the annual electrical and communications industry's Excellence Awards, hosted by the National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA).

State winners from across Australia attended this year's event at the Hilton Brisbane.

Three Victorian projects and two from each of New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland received the top national awards in front of 350 industry representatives including contractors, educators and government representatives. New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory also received commendations on projects that were narrowly beaten by the overall category winners.

"These projects are the best and most innovative we have seen over the past 12 months," said Suresh Manickam, NECA CEO. "They clearly enrich our industry and reinforce the strong reputation of our sector."

NECA congratulates all of our 2015 winners and wishes to acknowledge the ongoing support of the electrical and communications contracting sector for making the Awards such a resounding success," he concluded.

Winners				
Category	Company	State	Project Name	
1	Domestic Residence	Argus Technologies Solutions	VIC	Private Residence Berwick
2	Contracting Business	Elecorp Group	VIC	Mitcham Private Hospital – Mental Health Unit Victoria Court
3	Energy Efficiency and Environment	Floyd Industries	VIC	Supply and Installation of Cogeneration Plant for the Wangaratta Aquatic Centre
4	Lighting Project	Kerfoot Electrics	NSW	Dooleys Lidcombe Catholic Club
5	Industrial – Small Project	Klimate Solutions	TAS	IMAS Taroona Research Facility, Mechanical Electrical and Control Upgrade
6	Industrial – Medium Project	RBD Electrical & Instrumentation	TAS	Ta Ann Smithton Plywood Motive Installation
7	Industrial – Large Project	Downer EC&M	WA	Shiploader Replacement Project
8	Voice/Data	Programmed Electrical Technologies	QLD	Lady Cilento Children's Hospital
9	Commercial - Small Project	Barnwell Cambridge	NSW	Chief Entertainment
10	Commercial - Medium Project	Fredon Pty Ltd	QLD	Aldi Distribution Centre – Brendale
11	Commercial - Large Project	Downer EC&M	WA	Perth City Link Rail Project - Electrical and Communications

Commendations				
Category	Company	State	Project Name	
4	Lighting	Stowe Australia	ACT	Australian War Memorial External Lighting Upgrade
5	Industrial – Small Project	RIC Electrics	NSW	Cootamundra Oil Seeds
7	Industrial – Large Project	Stowe Australia	NSW	Patrick Port Botany Redevelopment Project
10	Commercial - Medium Project	Martin Donnelly	ACT	Canberra Data Centres Fyshwick - Phase 1 and 2

NECA awards Trade Teacher of the Year to WA for the second year running

Garry Christiansen – who lectures at the Great Southern Institute of Technology, is this year’s winner of the coveted Electrotechnology Industry Trade Teacher Award.

Garry is a committed, passionate professional with a wide range of experience gained from his career as an electrical engineer. He has developed innovative approaches to apprentice and employer support – including the development of an apprenticeship handbook used by his college, host employers and their apprentices.

He is very client-focused and works with a broad cross-section of regional host employers. And he has achieved excellent results with his Capstone assessments process.

Garry is also a passionate advocate of Training Package reform for the industry and regularly contributes to the national debate from a grass-roots delivery standpoint.

“We were very impressed by this year’s candidates,” said Wes McKnight, NECA’s

former President and leader of the judging panel. “Garry was the clear winner. But we were also so impressed by Brett Jotta – also from WA, that we have awarded him a Commendation. Brett teaches at the College of Electrical Training and we were very taken by his vision for the future and desire to see young people making a commitment to a Trade at a younger age,” he added.

As part of his prize Garry will attend the NECA National Excellence Awards in Brisbane at the end of November, and thereby joins the industry as we celebrate the best of the best in our industry.

These annual awards are testament to the quality of professionals teaching in our industry today and we take this opportunity of thanking all the committed teachers, lecturers and mentors supporting our apprentices, and post-qualification students, in their studies.

On behalf of our industry, we applaud Garry and Brett, for their great contribution.



Dave McInnes, Garry Christiansen (trade teacher) and Neville Palmer (chair of ElectroComms).

2015 National Apprentices Awards

This evening, some of Australia’s brightest electrical apprentices were recognised by National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA) at its National Apprentices Awards event at the Hilton Hotel in Brisbane.

The Awards are held annually to acknowledge the achievements of each state’s winners.

Guest speaker Brad Morrin – a former Canterbury Bulldog’s NRL player and apprenticeship ambassador, delivered an entertaining speech for all in attendance.

Apprentices from across the country gathered in Brisbane to hear the winners of three award categories: Industrial, Commercial/Domestic and Communications.

This year’s category winners are:

Industrial			
Placing	Name	State	Employer/host
1st	Jeremy Scheurwater	QLD	i-LEC Solutions
2nd	Daniel Cocker	WA	SCEE (Southern Cross Electrical Engineering)
3rd	James Huf	VIC	NECA Education & Careers

Commercial/Domestic			
Placing	Name	State	Employer/host
1st	Bradley Milligan	SA	Bordertown Pumps & Refrigeration
2nd	Cameron Kerr	ACT	Stowe Australia

Communications			
Placing	Name	State	Employer/host
1st	Jimi George	SA	PEER VEET Hosted by Expert Data Cabling
2nd	Nicholas Burnes	NSW	NECA Group Training Hosted by Stowe Australia