

A word from the CEO

As we head into a new financial year, with a new Federal Government, there are high expectations for F14/15 across our industry.

At NECA, we are fine tuning our policies and working with the relevant Government Departments to see where we can play a role in order to get our industry voice heard in all quarters. Safety remains our principal driver and a recent death in NSW only highlights the need to make everyone more aware of the risks associated with non-compliant products.

We are also starting to get more involved in the energy efficiency debate. We believe the electrical contractor has a big role to play in helping businesses and consumers find the best solution for their particular needs. There will be more on this in my future messages.

Over the next year we will be working closely with the ACCI, Voltimum, KNX and LJ Hooker on four strategic alliances, all aimed at strengthening our industry – and here is a brief overview of each relationship:

ACCI

Last month the ACCI endorsed an apprentice productivity initiative submitted by NECA and Business Group Australia (BGA) under ACCI's Productivity Leadership Program funded by the Federal Government. The project will examine potential gains that can be achieved by electrical contractors through a better understanding of their apprentice's performance and their contribution to a more productive workplace.

Voltimum

We will soon be going into our third year of the Does it Comply? campaign where we partner with Voltimum. The most recent study shows that almost 90% of electrical contractors put safety before price. Our aim is to get that up to 100% by this time next year. And to do that we need all contractors to sign the pledge. If you haven't done so, please visit www.doesitcomply.com.au. It



only takes a few minutes and we guarantee you will learn something new.

KNX

We started working KNX in 2013 and at the end of August we will join the KNX stand at the Integrate Expo in Sydney. This is the first step in our two organisations publicly working together and we hope it will be the first of many.

LJ Hooker

Earlier this year we signed up as a 'Knowledge Partner' on the LJ Hooker-initiated 'Liveability' initiative. This platform has been developed to help consumers build stronger and more energy-efficient homes. It's an exciting new development and a first step for NECA to engage with consumers.

In this issue of *Electrical Connection* we have expanded on all four programs and hope you find it an interesting and informative update.

Best regards,
Suresh Manickam
NECA CEO

Working together

Over the past few years many of you may have heard of KNX. Equally, you're probably wondering just what KNX is and what it's all about. In this article we hope to answer this and explain why NECA is supporting KNX in Australia.

What is KNX? Is it a company?

KNX is an open standard protocol which means that KNX certified products from over 340 manufacturers will all work together in the one automation system. Where KNX differs from other 'open' protocols is that it is centrally managed by the international KNX Association based in Brussels, Belgium to ensure total interoperability.

A bit like a company, the KNX Association is responsible for development of the KNX protocol, the ETS programming software, the training modules and the accreditation of training centres and new product certifiers.

How old is KNX and how long has it been in Australia?

KNX is over 20 years old. Founded in Europe, KNX has been embraced by electrical professionals and systems integrators in more than 120 countries, including Australia.

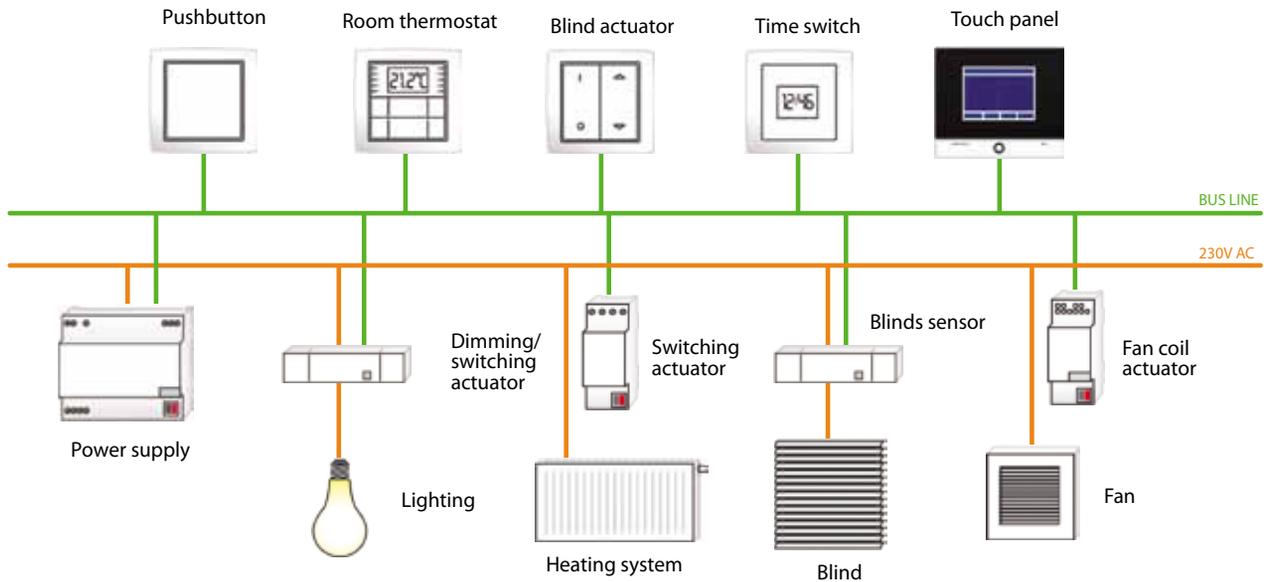
No one is quite sure when KNX arrived in Australia but it has been here for many years and there are hundreds of KNX installations around the country. The KNX National Group was formed in 2010.

I've heard that KNX is old technology. Is this true?

Yes, KNX is a technology that is over 20 years old. Does this limit what can be done with KNX? No, certainly not!

Our experience with KNX is that it is the only protocol that allows the total interconnection of all building controls, regardless of manufacturer, over a single converged operating system. Its time in the market and worldwide support from

A typical KNX Bus network with mixed devices



manufacturers, industry professionals and clients shows it is proven, upgradable and future-proof.

What are the benefits of KNX?

There are 10 key benefits to KNX. All of which mean there are no surprises and projects are quick and easy to deliver.

1. It is the worldwide standard for home and building control – ISO/IEC 14543-3.
2. It guarantees interoperability between products from different manufacturers.
3. It offers product quality – all KNX manufacturers must be ISO9001-certified.
4. All KNX devices are configured with a single manufacturer independent software tool – ETS.
5. It can be used for all applications within a building.
6. It is suitable for all types of buildings.
7. It offers two operating modes depending on the level of complexity required.
8. It also offers different transmission media; twisted pair, powerline and IP.
9. It can be easily linked to other systems; IP, BACnet, DALI and more.

10. The platform is independent. Manufacturers design and source their own products and chips.

Which companies are supporting KNX solutions in Australia?

Many of the 340 partner companies are represented in Australia. Some of the largest and most well-known KNX brands are ABB, Hager Electro, Somfy and Wago.

One of the best things about KNX is that there is a solution to meet every building control need at a range of price points. All it takes is a little bit of investigation.

What is the KNX National Group?

The KNX National Group of Australia is an association established to promote and support the growth of KNX in this country. It is made up of manufacturers, electricians, systems integrators and interested parties including media, industry associations and training suppliers.

Any company with an interest in KNX may join and more details can be found at www.knx.org.au.

How can I get trained in KNX?

Various manufacturers and certified training centres offer KNX courses. There are two levels of course; a basic and an advanced course. Once completed the basic course certifies attendees to commission KNX installations.

Information on training suppliers and courses can be found at www.knx.org.au

Why is NECA supporting KNX in Australia?

The KNX National Group and NECA are working together in Australia to promote the move towards compatible platforms across the electrical industry. The two organisations share important synergies given the wide range of electrical and communications products available on the Australian market.

NECA members benefit from KNX's manufacturer-independent open protocol providing a truly converged solution in home and building automation on a single platform. Being defined by an international standard, KNX allows NECA members to protect the future requirements of a project giving peace of mind to both the contractor and the client. ■

Increasing Liveability

Iconic real estate brand LJ Hooker has drawn on 85 years of real estate knowledge and has worked in collaboration with the sustainable design, building/construction and assessment industries to develop the Liveability Property Marketing Features™ and the 17 Things™ Checklist.

By identifying these new property features at the time of sale or rent, LJ Hooker is meeting the needs and growing demands of a new market in homes that offer the potential for reduced running costs and increased comfort.

These Liveability Property Marketing Features™ can only be recognised and marketed by professionally trained Liveability Real Estate Specialists. New or existing homes or apartments with six or more of the 17Things™ are eligible to use the Liveability Property Features™ icon on their property marketing.

This is exciting news as “LED lighting throughout” is the energy efficient lighting feature recognised on the 17Things™ checklist:

- What you look for when you're buying,
- What you plan for when you're renovating
- What you know will be recognised when you're selling.

17Things

1. Climate zone for this property
2. Living locally
3. Orientation
4. Cross ventilation
5. Zoning
6. Insulation*
7. Density of building materials
8. Windows (glazing) *
9. Shading or sun control
10. Efficient heating and cooling devices
11. Energy efficient lighting
12. Efficient hot water system
13. Solar photovoltaic (PV) system*
14. Low water garden
15. Water efficiency devices
16. Rainwater tanks
17. Energy rating*



We spoke to Cecille Weldon – Head of sustainability at LJHooker, to better understand the role NECA will play in this exciting new initiative.

What is NECA's role? What does NECA and its members bring to the table?

By collaborating with industry peak bodies and membership groups such as NECA, we are able to collaborate and bring trusted knowledge to consumers on Liveability.com.au and ensure that the right information is relayed to consumers in the most effective way.

What is the benefit to NECA members of NECA being involved?

NECA members who have been working with their customers to install LED lighting throughout the home will now have this feature recognised and marketed as a premium lighting feature by Liveability Real Estate Specialists.

Why do you think consumers will be interested in seeing organisations like NECA involved?

Liveability.com.au is a collaborative initiative with top Knowledge Partners, Council Partners and Community Partners. We believe it's important to demonstrate to consumers that we are able to work together in order to simplify the liveability message for them. Empowering them to make the decisions that are right for them with the best information direct from the

industry (guides, tips and checklists on the website).

Do you think consumers would use this platform to look for an electrician?

If a consumer is looking to renovate so that their home can be listed with the Liveability Property Marketing Features™ symbol, one of the simplest things they can do is to retrofit with LED lighting through an accredited electrician to install this feature.

We have a great opportunity to work with NECA to make the pathway to trained electricians, experienced in LED lighting, easier for the consumers. We have a number of innovations we are looking at including in the website to make this simpler and more effective for consumers and electricians.

Where does Energy Efficiency sit in this initiative?

We believe that the best home is one that's healthy, efficient, comfortable and connected to community so Liveability is more than energy efficiency. It's about water efficiency and living locally too. Energy efficient features are an important part in helping reduce running costs and increase comfort but we believe efficiency is also about the occupant understanding how to correctly use these feature. LED lighting provides great light quality and a cost effective manner. There is a lot of confusion in the market regarding the quality of LED lighting. We look forward to NECA working with us to provide consumers with simple with guidelines on this matter.

For more information about the Liveability Real Estate Initiative and the industry endorsements or finding a liveability real estate specialist go to www.ljhooker.com/liveability

To further support consumers to make these changes to their homes LJ Hooker has created the Liveability website. Liveability.com.au is a collaborative initiative that supports consumers to create your best home – healthy, efficient, comfortable and connected to community and NECA has just been signed up as a Liveability Knowledge Partner. ■

Does it comply?

Voltimum is a global web portal for the electrical industry. It operates in 13 countries and has over 330,000 registered electrical professionals. The Australian venture was launched in 2012 and reportedly now has more than 14,000 users.

Voltimum's overall aim and mission is to be the central reference point for all information relating to quality electrical products and key industry thematics such as energy efficiency, smart building, product compliance and standards and regulations.

The content is designed for electrical contractors of all sizes, engineers, architects and designers, builders, panel builders, specifiers and OEMs operating in all relevant electrical markets, and covers:

- Industry and supplier news.
- Product catalogues from leading brands in PDF, Flipbook and SKU e-catalogue formats.
- Extensive array of technical articles and whitepapers.
- Hundreds of training courses – classroom and online.
- Free e-newsletters - giving users a regular update of the latest from the industry.
- Access to industry technical experts.
- An iPhone App and mobile friendly website so users can access while on the road.

In addition to the product offering above, Voltimum also conducts live online webinars, with the purpose of educating electrical contractors on the latest technologies, technical topics and products. Voltimum offers these webinars monthly and free to all registered users.

You can register and find out more about Voltimum by accessing their website www.voltimum.com.au.

NECA partnership

NECA has been a Voltimum partner since the launch of Voltimum in 2012 and NECA supplies Voltimum with content on a range of key industry topics. And together Voltimum and NECA set up the 'Does it Comply?' platform.



DOES IT COMPLY?

Does it Comply?

In early 2013 Voltimum and NECA undertook an industry-wide electrical contracting survey that presented an alarming statistic showing that 75% of respondents indicated that they either saw some or a lot of non-compliant electrical products in the Australian Market.

On the back this Voltimum & NECA created the Does it Comply? campaign www.doesitcomply.com.au with the objective being to raise awareness and educate users of the dangers of using product that is not compliant to Australian Standards.

The campaign has united the electrical industry supply chain in the fight against non-compliant products.

The campaign encourages contractors to watch a short 10 minute webinar focusing on the issues around the risks of using non-compliant products and then answer 10 questions in an online test to become a 'Does it Comply?' signatory.

The campaign is already achieving great results, with the awareness of the dangers of using non-compliant products jumping from 28% to 89% in just a year, based on a second industry survey. Additionally more than 200 electrical contractors have already become signatories to the campaign, with another 500 receiving regular updates on the latest electrical product recalls and product safety advice. ■

Apprenticeship Productivity – An Important Issue

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) has endorsed an apprentice productivity initiative submitted by NECA and Business Group Australia (BGA) under ACCI's Productivity Leadership Program funded by the Federal Government.

The project will examine potential gains that can be achieved by electrical contractors through a better understanding of their apprentice's performance and their contribution to a more productive workplace.

NECA knows through its involvement in group training companies and feedback from its members that many employers are seriously questioning the economic advantages of taking on apprentices especially where there are very high costs through enterprise bargaining agreements and even substantial increases arising from the recent decisions of Fair Work Australia on Award employees. Any reduction in the number of apprentices in training and the number of completions creates a vicious circle of shortages of licensed electricians.

It is essential that the electrical contracting industry face these issues head on and find solutions that will ensure that a shortage of licensed electricians does not lead to a position where calls will be made to lower standards to enable partially trained workers to undertake electrical installation work. Making better use of apprentices through productivity gains ticks both boxes of better apprentice job satisfaction and increased productivity for the business.

The project will examine potential gains that can be achieved by electrical contractors through a better understanding of their apprentice's performance and their contribution to more productive workplaces. BGA will research, report and promote the strategies enabling factors that can maximise the contributions of apprentices at all stages across the apprenticeship.

Initially, the internal and external factors that had the most significant impact on the apprentice's productivity and commitment to completion will be identified. After considering these with productivity boosting options a toolkit will be produced that can be used by electrical contractors to enhance productivity. This toolkit will need to be validated and at least 30 electrical contracting businesses will participate in this part of the project. After this, BGA and NECA will conduct training for up to 300 electrical contractors focusing on the use of the toolkit and its application. ■