



national
electrical and
communications
association

NECA

NATIONAL ELECTRICAL AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION (NECA)

Western Australian Election Platform



CONTENTS

About NECA	4
Foreword	5
Training for the Future	6
Mature Age Apprenticeship Incentives	6
Group Training incentives for small and medium sized business	7
Addressing Workforce Shortages in the Electrical Sector.....	7
A safer and better regulated construction sector	8
Jumpstarting Small Business.....	10

About NECA

The National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA) is the leading industry body for Australia's electrical and communications sectors. With branches in every State and Territory, NECA represents more than 6,500 businesses across diverse industries, including construction, mining, air conditioning, refrigeration, manufacturing, communications, and renewable energy.

These businesses specialise in the design, installation, and maintenance of electrical and communication systems and electronic equipment, driving innovation and excellence across the country.

For over 100 years, NECA has advocated for the electrotechnology industry, championing safety efficiency, and regulatory compliance. The association represents the sector at all levels of government and within key industry forums.

NECA members play a vital role in Australia's economy, powering businesses, homes, and critical infrastructure. Their work enhances energy security, drives investment, and delivers sustainable, affordable solutions. NECA is committed to maintaining high industry standards, safeguarding the reputation and safety of the electrotechnology sector for tradespeople, consumers, and the broader community.

NECA Training and its group training organisation empowers the electrical, electricity supply, and communications industries by delivering a broad range of high-quality programs. These include pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, post-trade accredited, and industry-specific courses, all recognised for their excellence and holistic approach. We train or employ over 3,500 apprentices nationally, achieving an outstanding 90% plus completion rate – well above the average of public sector training of around 50%.

In response to Australia's projected shortage of 32,000 electricians by 2030, NECA Training promotes diverse career pathways, encouraging school students, school leavers, and Indigenous and mature-aged apprentices to enter the industry.

We are also committed to increasing female participation, with nearly 20% of our apprentices currently women, and aim to further grow this percentage in the years ahead.

NECA's Excellence Awards recognise achievements in innovation, safety, and training, while the Apprentice Awards celebrate emerging leaders shaping the future of the electrotechnology industry.

NECA is shaping Australia's future with a skilled workforce, sustainable businesses, and innovation to power communities and technology.

Foreword

NECA is integral in the development of the next generation of Australia's electrical and communications tradespeople, contractors and sub-contractors. Through our associated Group Training Organisations (GTOs) and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), NECA offers employment and trade training to thousands of apprentices nationally.

We represent the interests of electrical and communications contracting businesses to all levels of government and in regulatory, legislative and industry development forums. Our members make an essential economic contribution to the Western Australian economy – connecting businesses, homes, and infrastructure – encouraging investment, improving reliability and energy security, and delivering affordable, environmentally sustainable outcomes.

NECA is focused on the following key priorities:

- small business support
- unlocking infrastructure for job creation
- regulatory reform
- training for the future
- greater female participation in the sector.

NECA believes its evidence-based, industry driven recommendations will help Western Australia move forward, and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these issues with you. To discuss this submission or our industry, please contact our Head of Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs Scott Faragher on 0466 571842 or Scott.Faragher@neca.asn.au

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "O. Judd", is placed below the text "Yours sincerely,".

Oliver Judd

Chief Executive Officer

Training for the Future

Up to 35,000 additional electricians will be needed across Australia by 2030. With the proliferation of renewable technologies there is a national shortage of electricians trained in renewable technology installation.

Western Australia will be required to provide the electricians to deliver on the Government's net zero targets, renewable energy programs and to alleviate the current housing crisis and deliver new homes for the state. NECA also recognises that the viability of the VET system is a shared responsibility which should be strongly influenced and informed by industry and supported by government.

NECA is well placed through its state-based GTOs and RTOs to deliver agile training to this emerging market to ensure the future needs of members are met. To do this effectively, State and Federal governments must be actively engaged with industry to ensure it gets ahead of the training curve and remains there.

Mature Age Apprenticeship Incentives

NECA supports workplace initiatives that remove cultural barriers, break down discriminatory practices, and make the electrotechnology sector a better place to work for everyone.

Having a more diverse and inclusive industry is also important to meeting resourcing challenges and skills shortages the sector faces, while lowering the gender pay gap.

Anyone aged over 21 at commencement of their apprenticeship is treated as 'mature-aged' for remuneration purposes.

The cost to hire a mature age apprentice is a challenge for all businesses - the cost is 44% greater in the first year than that of a junior apprentice, 33% in the second year, 24% in year three and it gradually decreases to only a 6% difference in the fourth year.

However, mature age apprentices offer great benefits as potential tradespeople due to their life and work experience, commitment to work and training, qualifications, appreciation of safety protocols and many more.

The current disincentive to hire mature age candidates particularly disadvantages women, who are more likely to apply for an apprenticeship when over 21.

To raise awareness and support, recruitment practices, tailored education and campaigns will be required, aimed directly at women, to ensure they see the construction sector as a viable and long-term career path.

To demonstrate the effectiveness and benefits of initiatives such as NECA's culture change training, government subsidy schemes and procurement enhancements, NECA is proposing to work with State and Federal governments to supercharge female inclusion in trades, particularly for mature-age female entrants.

Reskilling the Existing Workforce

As emerging technologies continue to reshape the workplace, there is a growing need to reskill the existing workforce. With the adoption of new technologies such as solar power, electric vehicles, and battery storage, workers need continuous opportunities to update their skills.

NECA calls for a reskilling strategy that encourages lifelong learning and ensures the workforce remains adaptable in response to technological advancement. In addition to strengthening apprenticeship pathways, policies should be implemented to support mid-career workers and displaced workers, helping them retrain and transition into the high demand occupations in the Electrotechnology industry.

Group Training incentives for small and medium sized businesses

To address critical skills shortages in Western Australia, particularly in the construction, infrastructure, and renewable energy sectors, NECA proposes the introduction of a reimbursement scheme for Group Training Organisations (GTOs). This initiative would provide targeted financial support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that employ apprentices through GTOs, covering a portion of the associated fees. By alleviating the financial burden on SMEs, the scheme would encourage more businesses to engage apprentices, enabling a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers while maintaining high completion rates through the structured support offered by GTOs.

This proposal would position Western Australia as a leader in workforce development by enhancing the capacity of SME's to invest in apprenticeships. The scheme would focus on sectors critical to the state's housing, infrastructure, and clean energy goals, ensuring that the next generation of tradespeople are trained and employed locally. Supporting GTOs in this manner strengthens job security for apprentices and ensures alignment between industry training and workforce needs.

NECA urges a new Western Australian Government to implement a GTO reimbursement or subsidy scheme, providing financial support to SMEs that employ apprentices through GTOs.

Addressing Workforce Shortages in the Electrical Sector

The Western Australia electrical industry is facing a dual challenge: evolving workplace standards that require a constantly updated workforce and a critical shortage of skilled labour. With the government's ambitious plans for renewable energy projects, and emerging technologies like electric vehicles, Western Australia will require thousands more qualified electricians to meet demand. Fewer than 55% of those apprentices complete their trade training.

Attracting and retaining apprentices remains a key hurdle, with many young people hesitant to commit to a four-year program. Pre-apprenticeship initiatives have proven effective in addressing this issue, providing participants with valuable industry exposure before they decide to pursue a trade. Targeted programs for women and Indigenous Australians have also been successful in equipping underrepresented groups with the skills and confidence to enter the sector. NECA is ready to collaborate with the Western Australian Government to implement these proven strategies, ensuring a sustainable pipeline of skilled tradespeople to meet the state's growing

demands.

To retain and deliver quality outcomes for electrical apprentices we must provide formal mentoring and supervision training for employers. Implementing targeted mentoring programs supported by the State Government.

An appropriate government funded industry led Apprentice Mentoring Program is required across Western Australia to intervene early in the process of assisting apprentices and their employers that are in the electrical and communications industry and to provide them with the appropriate on the job support to ensure they stay in the industry and complete their trades.

A safer and better regulated construction sector

The Western Australian Government, in collaboration with the Commonwealth and other State and Territory jurisdictions, should prioritise regulatory consistency across Australia to create a fair, efficient, and competitive construction and electrotechnology sector. Divergent regulations and standards between jurisdictions create unnecessary complexity, increase costs for businesses, and hinder workforce mobility. A nationally harmonised approach will provide certainty for contractors, improve compliance outcomes, and support the long-term productivity and sustainability of the industry.

A key component of this reform should be the adoption of a National Occupational Licensing Regime. A standardised licensing framework across all states and territories would streamline qualifications, remove barriers to interstate work, and enhance industry-wide professional standards. By aligning licensing requirements nationally, businesses can operate with greater confidence, ensuring workers have the necessary skills while reducing administrative burdens and compliance costs.

Housing

Electricians are integral to delivering the front-end infrastructure required for housing developments, such as power connections and essential utilities, before construction can commence. However, significant delays caused by inefficiencies in planning and approval processes, roadblocks in infrastructure, design, opposition to competition and excessive regulatory barriers are stalling these critical works. These delays lead to increased project costs, prolonged housing shortages, and missed economic opportunities.

To address these challenges, the incoming government should streamline planning approvals, implement greater competitive and private sector infrastructure design. Additionally, investing in modern digital tools, such as integrated planning platforms, would increase transparency and expedite the delivery of front-end infrastructure works.

To support this transition and ensure the timely delivery of housing, the government must reduce regulatory barriers and fast-track housing development. As the Housing Industry Association (HIA) highlights, “streamlining planning and approval processes is necessary to meet Australia’s urgent housing needs” (HIA, 2022).

Electrical contractors must be equipped with the skills and resources to deliver these projects effectively, and the government must play an active role in creating a regulatory environment that supports the rapid construction and retrofitting of affordable, energy-efficient housing.

Security of Payments Reform

NECA advocates for security of payment reforms to ensure timely, fair payments, enhanced transparency, streamline dispute resolution, and protect financial stability, reducing delays and unfair practices within the construction industry. Subcontractors deserve to be paid for the work they have done but are a major component of impacted parties during liquidations.

NECA fully supports and recommends the implementation of the key findings from Mr John Murray's 2018 report which focused on 3 key pillars:

1. Minimising complexities and administrative burdens within the system.
2. Providing equal rights and protections across all jurisdictions.
3. Promoting prompt payment to ensure cash flow continuity.

Unfair Contract Terms

NECA members face significant challenges due to Unfair Contract terms (UCT), including imbalanced risk allocation, delayed payments, and unilateral changes, which undermine subcontractor stability. In the construction sector, these issues create financial instability, hinder competition, and increase project risks. Subcontractors, especially SMEs, bear disproportionate risks, leading to cash flow problems, project delays, and potential disputes.

Addressing these concerns is essential for ensuring a more balanced and sustainable environment for all businesses in the industry.

NECA advocates for urgent reform of UCTs in the West Australian construction sector. While amendments to the Competition and Consumer Act 2010, effective from 10 November 2023, represent some progress, further action is needed to address the disproportionate impact on subcontractors.

NECA would recommend ensuring fair and transparent contracts by eliminating unfair risk allocation and unreasonable liabilities, simplifying contracts to promote clarity and fairness for all parties involved. Further, UCT protection to all businesses in the construction sector, not just small enterprises. and finally providing standard form contract that identifies if such a contract has been amended.

Jumpstarting Small Business

Small business and family-owned enterprises (SMEs) are the lifeblood of Australia's economy, and dominate the electrical and communications contracting industry. Approximately 80% of businesses in our industry employ fewer than 20 staff, and national trends show the number of small businesses across the country is increasing.

Western Australia's Economic Capacity Building

Investing in Western Australia's electrotechnology workforce is essential to addressing the nationwide electrician shortfall, which is projected to reach 32,000 by 2030. To meet the WA State demand, the WA Government should implement targeted funding programs to increase apprenticeship commencements, with a particular focus on industry-led training providers who have consistently delivered higher completion rates than public institutions. Expanding financial incentives for employers who take on apprentices, particularly in critical infrastructure sectors, will ensure a steady pipeline of skilled workers.

Retention of skilled electricians is equally vital. Workforce shortages are exacerbated when experienced tradespeople leave the industry due to a lack of career progression or financial insecurity. Retention incentives, including targeted bonuses, wage subsidies, and ongoing training grants, should be introduced to keep skilled workers engaged. These initiatives would help stabilise the industry and reduce workforce churn.

Diversity in the workforce remains a key opportunity for growth. Underrepresented groups, including women and Indigenous Australians, must be encouraged to enter the electrical trade. This requires dedicated recruitment campaigns, mentorship programs, and training incentives designed to remove barriers to entry and foster a more inclusive industry. Government and industry must collaborate to create pathways that support long-term participation and career progression for these groups.

Workforce planning needs to ensure it is aligned with future infrastructure projects to guarantee the availability of skilled labour when it is needed most.

Australia's Digital Growth

Australia's growing reliance on digital infrastructure demands urgent investment in energy capacity, workforce skills, and domestic data storage capabilities. Western Australia, as a strategic hub, must play a key role in supporting the expansion of power, storage, and transmission infrastructure to meet the energy-intensive needs of data centres and digital industries. Upgrades to the electricity grid, base load energy, alongside investment in battery storage and renewable integration, will ensure energy security and affordability for these critical facilities.

To meet the skills demands of AI, automation, and energy-efficient technologies, dedicated workforce development programs should be introduced to upskill electricians and energy specialists. These programs should be industry-led, ensuring training is aligned with real-world needs. Collaboration between government, industry, and RTOs should be expanded to ensure workers are equipped with the expertise required to support digital growth.

Western Australia should also incentivise domestic data centre investment to reduce reliance on offshore storage and enhance Australia's data sovereignty. This includes incentives for locally owned data centres, support for regional infrastructure development, and policies that encourage onshore cloud storage solutions.

Smart energy solutions must be integrated into new and existing data centres. Smart grid deployment should be actively supported to optimise energy consumption, improve efficiency, and reduce operational costs for data-driven industries. Targeted grants for smart energy projects will accelerate adoption and ensure that Western Australia remains a leader in digital infrastructure development.





T 1300 361 099.

E scott.faragher@neca.asn.au

W www.neca.asn.au