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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Apprentices need better support to overcome poor completion rates and address skills shortages**

Australia's apprentices and trainees need significantly improved levels of mentoring and support in order to lift the unsatisfactorily low completion rate and to help attract the thousands of skilled people needed for the workforce.

The National Apprenticeship Employment Network (NAEN), which represents the employers of approximately 25,000 apprentices and trainees, supports the federal government's planned overhaul of apprentice support measures, announced today.

The Minister for Skills and Training Brendan O'Connor outlined plans for a new service model that places apprentices at the centre, and better supports them from commencement to completion.

The Chief Executive Officer of NAEN, Dianne Dayhew, said the measures are urgently needed to stop the attrition of apprentices that is contributing to the nation's skills shortage at a time when thousands of new entrants are needed across many industries.

"We cannot accept that half of our apprentices and trainees drop out. There is an urgent need to examine the range of support services, make sure they are focussed and effective, and ensure that they are delivering more than 'light touch' support," Ms Dayhew said.

"Group training organisations have developed over the past forty years an effective system of mentoring and support that helps retain and engage apprentices and results in better completion rates than through direct employment.

"Mentoring and support is a specialist role which needs to be delivered by organisations with properly trained and experienced personnel, and with strong links to local communities and the labour market," Ms Dayhew said.

The GTO approach has a focus on regular face-to-face interaction that develops strong relationships between field officers, apprentices and host employers, and provides for rotation of apprentices where required.

"There is no secret to what works in this area. GTOs have been doing this for decades and have seen the results of intensive, focussed apprentice support from sign-up to completion," Ms Dayhew said.

NAEN welcomes the federal government's measures to address poor completion rates, especially over the first two years when the chance of dropout is greatest.

There is more that can be done to improve diversity, including from women in non-traditional trades, First Nations people, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

GTOs run programs to promote women into trades, including through pre-apprenticeships, to provide direct exposure and a pathway to trade careers.

The group training network is the largest employer of Indigenous apprentices and trainees. A key element in this record of achievement has been the partnerships built with Indigenous communities, local businesses, job agencies, schools and training providers.

NAEN looks forward to working with government in helping to design and deliver much needed additional support services, utilising the experience of the GTO network which has been providing tailored apprentice support services for decades.

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The National Apprentice Employment Network is the national peak body representing the network of over 100 Group Training Organisations (GTOs) employing more than 20,000 apprentices and trainees throughout Australia. [www.naen.com.au](http://www.naen.com.au)