

NATIONAL APPRENTICE EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

# ANNUAL REPORT **2024-2025**



National Apprentice  
Employment Network



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National Apprenticeship  
Employment Network

## ABOUT NAEN

The National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN) is the peak national body representing the network of Group Training Organisations (GTOs) that employ some 25,000 apprentices and trainees across Australia.

NAEN strives to facilitate a strong and diverse national network of member GTOs that are able to speak with a single, united voice in dealing with governments, stakeholders and policy makers.

NAEN plays a key part in the development of national policy affecting the VET sector.





# NAEN BOARD DIRECTORS

NAME	BOARD POSITION
<b>Sharon Smith</b>	(Chair to 6 December 2024; Director from 6 December 2024)
<b>Tom Emeleus</b>	(Deputy Chair to 6 December 2024; Chair from 6 December 2024)
<b>Kathryn Stenson</b>	(Deputy Chair from 6 December 2024)
<b>Andrew McCarthy</b>	
<b>David Fagan</b>	Appointed 27 November 2024
<b>Gideon Perrott</b>	
<b>Greg Megaw</b>	Appointed 12 November 2024
<b>Iain McDougall</b>	
<b>Leanne Wallace</b>	Retired 30 August 2024
<b>Nick Couper</b>	
<b>Paul Hillberg</b>	
<b>Stuart Diepeveen</b>	
<b>Tracey Kelly</b>	Retired 11 September 2024



# DIRECTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

## SHARON SMITH



Chair of NAEN, retired as Chair after 2 years on 6 December 2024 (6 years as Chair and Deputy combined). Appointed Director of NAEN and NSW ACT. Member of NAEN Audit Board Sub-Committee and member of NAEN Indigenous Programs Working Group. CEO and Executive Director Zeal Futures and Zeal Futures Learning; Director of Coleambally Irrigation Cooperative Limited (CICL) and Member of CICL Audit, Risk & Corporate Governance Committee; Former General Manager of Business Strategy and Communications, GAICD, F Fin.

## TOM EMELEUS



Tom is the CEO of NECA Training and Apprenticeships. He commenced his career as a cadet engineer with Sydney Electricity in 1993. He has a combined degree in electrical engineering and international studies (Indonesian) with first class honours and a Master of Engineering Management. He has held executive positions in the Electrotechnology and Electrical Supply Industries since 2003 and has recruited and trained over 3000 apprentices in that time. Tom is responsible for NECA's group training and training businesses in NSW, QLD, WA and the ACT. Over twenty years, Tom has held Board positions on Federal and State bodies responsible for vocational training and group training and has been an active proponent for Group Training and VET to government, the media, industry and the community. Tom is a Member Representative on the NAEN Board of Directors.

## KATHRYN STENSON



Member Elected Director of NAEN. CEO of GTNT Group, over 20 years of experience in the employment industry, governance, strategic planning, management, and business development to the NAEN Board of Directors. Board roles with the National Australian Apprenticeships Association (NAAA), the Apprenticeship Employment Network QLD/NT (AENQLD/NT), and YouthworX NT.

## ANDREW MCCARTHY



Member Elected Director of NAEN, Representing VIC. Member of NAEN Conference Working Group. CEO of the Victorian Group Training Company (VGTC); Managing Director of National Payroll Group; Chair of Audit and Risk Management Sub-Committee National Payroll Group, Committee member of Local Careers Transition Network.

## DAVID FAGAN



TAS Appointed Director of NAEN from 27 November 2024. CEO of the Tasmanian Building Group Apprenticeship Scheme (TASBGas). Re-appointed to NAEN board after an earlier period as TAS Appointed Director during 2020. He has served on the Board of AEN (Tasmania) since 2015 and has occupied the role of Chair or Deputy Chair since 2017. Served ten years in group training and prior 27 years in banking and finance. Diploma of HR, Deakin University.

## GIDEON PERROTT



Member Elected Director of NAEN. CEO of NECA Education & Careers (GTO and RTO operating in VIC and TAS). Early career in banking, leading large sales, service and marketing teams at ANZ and NAB and as a management consultant (PA Consulting Group Plus). Corporate and commercial leadership roles with Medibank and Energy Australia and Kangan Institute of TAFE.

## GREG MEGAW



SA Appointed Director of NAEN from 12 November 2024. General Manager of Group Training Employment (GTE). Employed by GTE since April 2000, originally as a Field Officer mainly dealing within the construction industry. Greg leads advocacy for GTOs in SA backed by GTE's 40-year history.

## IAIN MCDOUGALL



Member Elected Director of NAEN, recognised for reaching 20 years of service on NAEN Board. Long serving member of NAEN Audit Board Sub-Committee. General Manager of Hospitality Group Training WA Inc (HGT WA); and during FYR moved to part time advisory role for HGT WA to support new General Manager. Member Strategic Workforce Advisory Group, Service and Creative Skills Australia; Board Member, FutureNow.

## LEANNE WALLACE



TAS Appointed Director of NAEN (retired 30 August 2024). CEO of Work & Training in Tasmania and Chair of Apprentice Employment Network Tasmania; Committee Member of the Local Jobs Program Taskforce North and Northwest Tasmania.

## NICK COUPER



Member Elected Director of NAEN. Member of NAEN Conference Working Group. Chief Operating Officer of HunterNet Career Connections, responsible for all WHS&S, financial sustainability, compliance, diversity, new and repeat business manufacturing, defence, and new energy. With over 18 years in the vocational education training sector across National GTO and RTO providers. Board member of Hunter Manufacturing Awards, member of the Hunter Jobs & Skills Taskforce.

## PAUL HILLBERG



QLD/NT Appointed Director of NAEN. Member of NAEN Conference Working Group. General Manager Apprenticeships Queensland, Chairperson of Apprentice Employment Network QLD/NT; MBA – QUT.

## STUART DIEPEVEEN



WA Appointed Director of NAEN, Chair of Audit Board Sub-Committee and Chair of Board Governance Committee. General Manager of Electrical Group Training (EGT); Chair of AEN (WA) Inc; Director of the Australia New Zealand Electrotechnology Training Alliance (ANZETA); Advance Diploma Business Management; Graduate Certificate Business Leadership; Electrician and Former EGT Apprentice.

## TRACEY KELLY



SA Appointed Director of NAEN (retired 11 September 2024). During this period - CEO of mteSA, President of the AEN SA Board and Chair of the AEN SA Governance Subcommittee. Fellow member with the Governance Institute of Australia. Over 26 years senior management experience in the NGO, health and training sectors; Bachelor Health Sciences (Hons); MBA (majoring HR and Governance); Graduate Diploma of Applied Corporate Governance and Risk Management.





# STAFF

<b>DIANNE DAYHEW</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>DAVID NAGY</b>	National Manager, Membership and Engagement
<b>KRISTEN SYDNEY</b>	Executive Support and Projects Officer
<b>ANGIE TURAY</b>	Projects Manager
<b>BRETT TOLL</b>	Contracts Manager, First Nations Projects
<b>SAMANTHA GRANT</b>	National Manager, Building Women's Careers

## CONTRACTED SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

<b>BOB BOWDEN</b>	Communications Advisor
<b>KEN LANCERO</b>	Company Accountant
<b>DAVID HUBBARD</b>	Company Accountant (from March 2025)
<b>LEONIE STANFIELD</b>	Careers Projects Manager
<b>JULIE KRIEGER</b>	Administration Support



## OUR PURPOSE

- 1 We are Australia's largest employer network of apprentices and trainees, spanning a diverse range of industries across the country.
- 2 Under the unique group training model, our members directly employ apprentices and trainees and place them with host businesses.
- 3 This solves workplace staffing needs, while providing outstanding skills development, experience and support for our apprentices and trainees.
- 4 Group Training significantly better completion rates than the traditional model.
- 5 Group Training provides a proven platform for successfully driving increased participation by under-represented groups.

## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 1 Advocate for GTO network as an integral part of the solution for national skills priorities
- 2 Amplify NAEN voice through GTO network and key stakeholder groups
- 3 Support a growing NAEN membership
- 4 Build a robust, financially sustainable organisation



## CHAIR'S REPORT

It was a period of significant progress for the National Apprentice Employment Network during 2024-25 and one of continued reform and change across the apprenticeship sector more generally.

Apprentice and trainee numbers across Australia remained relatively flat, and the numbers engaged in group training also steadied. The focus of Commonwealth policy shifted to priority occupations and areas of skills shortage, meaning incentive payments were more tightly targeted.

The group training network continued to demonstrate agility and dynamism, with innovative models and a focus on mentoring and support that led to above average completion rates for apprentices and trainees.

The Commonwealth's landmark Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System made a series of recommendations to address poor completion rates and, importantly, singled out group training for its superior performance.

The Review came at a pivotal time for the sector and provided a well-considered pathway to address many of the obstacles and bottlenecks that hamper the take-up of apprenticeships, especially in an environment where shorter duration training is often the preference in some non-licensed occupations.

NAEN was actively engaged in consultations on the Review and other important national projects, including those undertaken by the Federal Government, Jobs and Skills Australia and the ten Jobs and Skills Councils.

The national body worked with the Commonwealth Government and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to strengthen the apprenticeship system for both employers and trainees.

NAEN and its members continued to deliver support for priority groups. NAEN continues with important work to deliver jobs and training to First Nations people, and it is playing a vital part in helping to attract more female apprentices to construction trades.

At a series of events throughout the year, NAEN showcased the valuable work of the group training sector and helped to promote vocational choices to audiences that include students, careers advisers and industry. NAEN's national conference has become a pivotal event in the VET calendar.

Throughout the past financial year, NAEN has awarded Life Membership to esteemed figures from the GTO network – Stuart Diepeveen, Di Menz and Stephen Craven – all longstanding members who have made immense contributions to group training.





It was also an honour to celebrate Iain McDougall's 20 years on the NAEN Board and reflect on the valuable part he has played.

I would like to thank all the Board Directors for the work that they do – lending their knowledge, experience and insights to make for a vibrant and effective national body.

I extend my appreciation to Chief Executive Officer Dianne Dayhew and her team for the work that they do to enhance the role and the influence of group training and its members.

I also thank my immediate predecessor as Chair, Sharon Smith, for leading NAEN with clarity and purpose.

Finally, I thank the GTO members from around Australia who are instrumental in advancing opportunities for tens of thousands of apprentices and trainees and making such a valuable contribution to the communities in which they operate.

**Tom Emeleus**  
Chair



## CEO'S REPORT

The 2024-25 financial year was one of achievement, growth and collaboration for the National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN), its members and partner organisations.

It was a period of considerable success for the group training network as a whole – whether it be in policy achievement, national, state and territory awards, or in innovative partnerships that have secured important work on the national stage.

It was somewhat unusual that NAEN hosted two national conferences in the period – the 2024 'Skills for Life' conference in Adelaide, and the 2025 'Future Skills, Changing World' conference in Brisbane in June. These were landmark events for the group training sector, hosting numerous speakers across government, industry and the VET sector.

On the policy and political front, NAEN welcomed a new federal Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon Andrew Giles MP who was sworn in in May following the federal election, replacing the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP. As part of the pre-election campaign, NAEN provided policy content for GTOs to advance priority issues to local MPs and candidates.

Also following the federal election, NAEN was delighted to receive advice that The Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, had agreed to be the Patron of NAEN.

Earlier in 2025, the Federal Government released the Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System, undertaken by Ms Lisa Paul and Dr Iain Ross. The report, 'Skills for tomorrow: Shaping the future of Australian apprenticeships', made 34 recommendations, including proposals to significantly broaden the use of high performing GTOs, most notably for SMEs engaging apprentices and trainees.

NAEN liaised extensively with the GTO network to ensure its priorities were heard in the consultations over the Strategic Review and was delighted that this was strongly reflected in the final report which went to the federal government.

NAEN was successful in securing a \$4.3 million grant under the federal government's Building Women's Careers (BWC) program. The NAEN-led project was one of ten that will address gender imbalance in the construction sector. NAEN will work with partners, Australian Workers Union, Bendigo Kangan Institute, and Women in Adult and Vocational Education to progress this initiative.

An important initiative for GTOs was the Federal Government's GTO Reimbursement Program which reimburses some or all of the cost of GTO services for SMEs that host an apprentice in priority occupations



NAEN also continues valuable work in Central Australia, where it delivers employment and training to Indigenous communities under the Commonwealth's Indigenous Skills and Employment Program.

In NSW, NAEN holds the contract for the Building, Construction, Resources and Infrastructure Industry Training Advisory Body, providing independent industry advice on skills and training to Training Services NSW, part of the NSW Department of Education.

A proud moment was the Today's Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders' (TSTL) program, held in Canberra in November 2024, when 25 of Australia's most promising apprentices and trainees took part in an intensive week of career development. Since its commencement in 2004, TSTL has seen almost 300 apprentices and trainees embark on this transformational leadership experience.

I would like to commend the work of member GTOs and congratulate them on the contribution they make to Australia's skills development. They work with tens of thousands of apprentices and trainees to equip them with the technical requirements, on-the-job experience and life skills that set them up for the future.

I also thank the state and territory Apprentice Employment Networks for their support, advice and input on many of the important issues facing the sector.

I thank the staff and consultants that make up the NAEN secretariat and acknowledge the work they do to meet the needs of members and stakeholders.

I also thank the NAEN Board – led by Chair Sharon Smith up until December, and subsequently Tom Emeleus – both of whom provide invaluable leadership and guidance. Each and every board director brings extraordinary knowledge and experience that enables NAEN to undertake the work it does on behalf of members.

**Dianne Dayhew**

Chief Executive Officer

## ADVOCACY

NAEN undertook extensive consultation with federal ministers, MPs, government advisers, departmental officials and stakeholders as part of its advocacy for the sector. Consultations included the following issues:

- ✧ The Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System
- ✧ The Federal Budget
- ✧ The Australian Skills Guarantee
- ✧ The preparation of a member campaign kit for the May 2025 Federal Election
- ✧ The implementation of the recommendations of the Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System
- ✧ The future of Australian Apprenticeship Incentive payments
- ✧ The New Energy Apprenticeship Program
- ✧ The Group Training Organisation Reimbursement Program
- ✧ The Australian Apprenticeship Priority Skills List





## EVENTS

NAEN hosted two highly successful National Conferences during the period.

### NAEN 2024: 'Skills for Life'



More than 240 delegates from across the skills and training sectors attended NAEN 2024 in Adelaide over three days in July 2024.

It attracted visitors from across the country and featured an outstanding array of speakers from government, industry and the apprentice network.

The conference commenced with a Welcome Reception at Government House in Adelaide, hosted by the Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson.

NAEN was honoured to host the then Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon Brendan O'Connor in his last official duty as minister.

The South Australian Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Blair Boyer outlined the state's growing need for skills across key sectors, including the expanding defence segment.

One of the highlights was a panel discussion with all ten Jobs and Skills Councils where many of the vital issues for emerging skills and workforce needs were debated.

## NAEN 2025: 'Future Skills, Changing World'

More than 200 delegates attended NAEN 2025 in Brisbane in June 2025 to hear experts from across the VET sector.

'Future Skills, Changing World' attracted ministers, government officials, international speakers and representatives from both Jobs and Skills Australia and the various Jobs and Skills Councils.

NAEN 2025 was held to coincide with the WorldSkills Australia 2025 National Championships & Skills Show, and enabled delegates to visit the contests and witness the extraordinary feats of Australia's best apprentices and trainees.

TAFE Queensland was a magnificent partner and showcased its student talent with artwork and speaker gifts.

NAEN thanks all its corporate partners and especially the NAEN 2025 Gold Partners, MEGT and AustralianSuper for helping to make this such a successful, well-attended event.



## 'Ideas, Information & Inspiration' Webinar Series

NAEN hosted a series of live events, as part of its regular 'Ideas, Information and Inspiration' series of webinars. These included:

- ReadySkills: Practical life skills that meet learners where they are
- Exploring apprentice and trainee activity and outcomes in GTOs using NCVER data
- The launch of 'Together We RISE', a project reshaping the future of women in trades
- Understanding the GTO Reimbursement Program
- Building Women's Careers Program – an information session hosted by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)
- New Member Benefit Launch: Workplace Relations Support for Members
- Meet the Providers: New Energy Apprenticeship Mentoring & Apprentice Connect Specialists
- Women and Super - Bridging the gap together, featuring Yen Du, Education Manager, Australian Super
- Learning about the Global Footprint Scholarships
- Federal Budget measures impacting apprentices and trainees, with Thomas Varendorf, DEWR



## MEMBER ALERTS AND NEWSLETTERS

NAEN published regular Newsletters covering matters of interest across the VET sector. NAEN also issued timely Member Alerts to keep members up to date with latest developments immediately relevant to their business operations. These included:

- Regular WorkSight/NAEN Workplace relations updates
- Request for apprentices engaged in Hairdressing to participate in a federal government pilot program
- NAEN 2025: 'Future Skills: Changing World'
- Global Footprint Scholarships
- Prime Minister Albanese announces new Ministry
- Federal election campaign kit for NAEN members
- Nominations open for NAEN Life Membership
- NAEN awarded Building Women's Careers grant
- Board Changes at NAEN
- Group training winners and finalists at the Australian Training Awards
- Building Women's Careers program applications open
- Today's Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders 2024 nominations

## MEDIA RELATIONS

NAEN provided regular information, responses and feedback to the media and was often a first point of call for journalists seeking information on a range of issues impacting apprenticeships and traineeships. NAEN distributes media releases to print and broadcast outlets and provides comment and background on a range of issues relevant to the sector. NAEN Chief Executive Officer Dianne Dayhew is regularly sought for media comment and features in a range of media outlets.

# OUR PROGRAMS

## NSW ITAB PROGRAM

NAEN operates the contract for the NSW Building, Construction, Resources and Infrastructure (BCRI) Industry Training Advisory Body. Under the contract, BCRI undertakes liaison with industry and report to Training Services NSW, within the NSW Department of Education. BCRI's role is to advise on issues related to skills and workforce development, licencing, and apprenticeships and traineeships, within its industry areas.

## 'TODAY'S SKILLS: TOMORROW'S LEADERS' PROGRAM



NAEN's landmark professional development program for apprentices and trainees, the 'Today's Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders' (TSTL) program, continued in 2024, with 25 apprentices and trainees – 20 selected by GTOs and five finalists from the 2023 Australian Training Awards. The week-long intensive residential program ran in Canberra from 3-8 November 2024 and was officially launched by the Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC. The group also spent a day at Parliament House where they met ministers and MPs. The TSTL program commenced in 2004 and has seen more than 250 apprentices and trainees participate.



## TOGETHER WE RISE: BUILDING WOMEN'S CAREERS (BWC) PROGRAM

The Together We RISE program represents NAEN's national commitment to strengthening apprenticeship pathways for women and improving the safety, inclusion, and long-term retention of women in trades. The program was established under the Commonwealth's Building Women's Careers (BWC) grant, following NAEN's successful submission in late 2024 and the development of formal partnerships with WAVE, Bendigo Kangan Institute (BKI), and the Australian Workers' Union (AWU).

During 2024–25, the program shifted from design to delivery across its first two pillars. Under Pillar One, Gender Impact Assessments were initiated with participating Group Training Organisations (GTOs), marking a sector-wide assessment of gendered experiences across the apprenticeship lifecycle. These assessments will inform the development of Gender Equality Action Plan, providing GTOs with evidence-based strategies and recommendations to strengthen recruitment, wellbeing, safety, and progression outcomes for women apprentices.

Pillar Two has focused on building connection and capability across the national network. Key achievements included the launch of the RISE website as a central information and engagement hub, the establishment of the RISE Champions Community (bringing together GTO leaders committed to cultural change) and significant development work for the RISE & Shine women's apprenticeship network. This network will deliver peer learning, reverse mentoring, and apprentice-led insights to inform ongoing program refinement.

The program has also commenced planning for the inaugural Apprentice Assembly, a new forum designed to elevate apprentice voice and embed lived-experience insights into national decision-making.

Together We RISE has laid strong foundations for system-wide change, supporting GTOs to create safer, more inclusive and sustainable pathways for women in trades. The program will continue to scale in 2026, deepening engagement and expanding impact across the national network.

## NAEN INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS

### TAILORED ASSISTANCE EMPLOYMENT GRANTS (TAEG)

The National Indigenous Australians Agency's (NIAA) Tailored Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG) program was finalised during 2024-25. Despite no new funding becoming available, NAEN was able to successfully broker more than \$450,000 in funding to member GTOs during the financial year, supporting the ongoing employment of First Nations apprentices and trainees. Following extensive lobbying for continuation of the TAEG program, the Commonwealth made it clear that it would not consider further extensions, in line with the rollout of the place-based Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP).

### INDIGENOUS SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (ISEP)

NAEN is contracted by NIAA to deliver a project that engages young First Nations people residing in Alice Springs Town Camps and supports them in their pursuit of employment. This project is delivered in partnership with NAEN member GTNT Group and a range of other key NT-based service providers.

After initial delays in project commencement, NAEN engaged Brett Toll in the role of Contracts Manager, First Nations Projects in late 2024. Brett engaged partner organisations, developed governance and risk management structures and commenced program delivering in early 2025. The ISEP project is focussed on engaging young people and equipping them for work, as well as supporting employers to develop culturally safe environments. Despite entrenched disadvantage faced by young people residing in Alice Springs, there have been early signs of success in engaging the target cohort of 15-19 year olds and supporting employment for individuals ready to enter employment.





# STATE AND TERRITORY REPORTS



## NEW SOUTH WALES & AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

BY JASON SULTANA, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The 2024–25 financial year has continued to test the resilience and adaptability of Group Training Organisations (GTOs) across New South Wales and the ACT. While the sector remains an essential part of Australia's vocational education and employment landscape, GTOs have faced a mix of familiar and emerging pressures.

Vacancy shortages persist, particularly in key trade and regional areas, and cost-of-living pressures continue to impact both employers and apprentices. Rising operational costs – exacerbated by workers' compensation premium adjustments in NSW and the ACT – have placed additional strain on many GTOs. At the same time, the lack of positive changes to Federal Government incentive programs has created challenges in planning and forecasting for the year ahead.

Despite these ongoing pressures, the sector continues to demonstrate growth, strength, and innovation. There are now 48 registered GTOs operating across NSW, providing valuable employment pathways for thousands of apprentices and trainees each year. These organisations remain at the forefront of workforce development, supporting industry demand and contributing to the broader economic health of their communities.

AEN NSW & ACT has continued to work closely with both state and territory governments to ensure that GTOs have opportunities to participate meaningfully in workforce and skills initiatives. Our advocacy efforts remain focused on ensuring that the GTO model is recognised for its value in delivering strong employment outcomes, especially for young people and jobseekers who need structured support to succeed.

GTOs remain integral delivery partners in several key government programs, including:

- The NSW 1000 Apprenticeships and Traineeships in Government Program
- The NSW Government IT Program
- The NSW GTO Recruitment Program
- The NSW Educational Pathways Program

Over the past 12 months, we have also seen a continued shift in the way GTOs are evolving to meet market demand. Many are broadening their services, offering “managed services” solutions to help employers navigate recruitment and compliance more efficiently. This is particularly true with supporting local councils.

This adaptability reflects the strength of the GTO model – its ability to evolve in response to industry and social trends while continuing to prioritise apprentice and trainee wellbeing.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our members for their continued commitment, collaboration, and innovation throughout the year. Our Executive Team and partners at the National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN) have provided invaluable support and national leadership during a period of ongoing transition.

Special thanks go to our NSW and ACT representatives on the NAEN Board – Sharon Smith, Tom Emeleus, and Nick Couper – for their advocacy and contribution to national policy discussions. Their insights and leadership ensure that the interests of our region's GTOs are strongly represented on the national stage.

Together, we look ahead to 2025 with optimism and determination, confident that the GTO network will continue to play a critical role in building a skilled, resilient, and future-ready workforce.



## QUEENSLAND & NORTHERN TERRITORY

BY CRAIG WESTWOOD, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Members across Queensland and Northern Territory have experienced a 2025 that can be best described as “status quo”.

Particularly in Queensland, the long-term Olympic forecast for increased skills and training associated with Olympic venues has not yet turned into opportunity, with major projects still very much in the planning stages.

Many members are reporting a better outlook for 2026 with high levels of “pending vacancies” and greater numbers of quality apprentice and trainee candidates.

AENQNT will enter 2026 with a new and now long-term agreement with Queensland Government for the representation and monitoring of GTOs in Queensland.

Accordingly, this will bring a greater focus to the work of AENQNT and we look forward to consulting with members in early 2026 on the program of work to support high quality GTO services.

The newly released “Right Skills” strategy includes greater support for apprentices to complete their training.

This includes a long-term agreement and immediate expansion for the Queensland Out of Trade Register program operated by AENQNT and known as Trade Apprentices.

We welcome Natasha “Tash” Hope and Rebecca “Bec” Smits to the Trade Apprentices team as they lead out the expanded services.

In 2025 we welcomed new GTO members Protech and Frontline HR along with Associate members Murray Mallee Training Company, Action Trades & Apprenticeships, and Worklinks.

The year saw Smart Apprenticeship Solutions Chief Executive Steve Craven recognised with both NAEN & AENQNT Life Membership before moving into retirement. We thank Steve for his huge contribution to skills in Queensland and in particular the Gold Coast region.





## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

BY MATT LOWE, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Over the past 12 months, AEN SA has continued its strong upward trajectory, delivering significant growth, strengthening our industry presence, and enhancing value for both members and stakeholders.

Thanks to a highly committed Board and a clear strategic direction, AEN SA is now recognised as a central voice in South Australia's apprenticeship and traineeship ecosystem.

### Organisational Performance

AEN SA achieved exceptional results across all major metrics this year including a 33% increase in total revenue, driven by:

- 43% growth in event revenue
- 345% growth in sponsorship and government-funded initiatives

Associate Membership expanded from just 1 member to more than 20, with a further 10 expected in the coming year, coupled by Full GTO Membership also increasing, now sitting at 22 members.

This growth, combined with the continuation of SAGTP funding and strong event performance, places the association in its most robust financial position in recent years.

### Membership Value & Services Delivered

AEN SA delivered an expanded program of high-quality services and engagement opportunities, including:

#### Major Events

- Annual Conference
- Field Officers Conference
- Awards Gala Dinner
- Leaders Luncheon Series featuring both the Hon. Blair Boyer MP, Minister for Education, Training & Skills and Minister for Police, and the South Australian Skills Commissioner, Cameron Baker
- Exclusive Roundtables with Hon. Scott Buchholz MP, Federal Shadow Minister for Skills and Training

#### Member Services

- Implementation of the SMART Kit WHS solution
- Major redevelopment of the AEN SA website

These initiatives have improved our visibility, strengthened relationships across government and industry, and reinforced the relevance of our members' collective work. Today, one in every five apprentices in South Australia is employed through an AEN SA member, underscoring our critical role in shaping VET policy and workforce development.

### **Advocacy & Sector Leadership**

AEN SA has intensified its advocacy efforts leading into the upcoming South Australian State Election in March 2026, representing members on key issues including:

- Expansion of the GTO Boost and SAGTP funding
- Improvements to regional travel reimbursements
- Labour licensing reforms
- Broader policy and regulatory issues impacting GTOs

South Australian GTOs continue to lead the nation, employing 18% of all apprentices and trainees in the state—the highest % market share across any jurisdiction nationally.

### **Governance & Strategic Direction**

The Board consisting of our President Jason Polgreen, Vice President Greg Megaw, and members Luke Walsh, Natasha Black, Brian Rungie and Greg Bassani OAM have played an outstanding role in steering AEN SA through a period of rapid growth and transition. Their leadership, supported by the outcomes of the strategic review and three-year plan—has created a strong foundation for future success.

AEN SA also acknowledges the valued engagement of our Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia along with the ongoing support of the Hon. Blair Boyer MP, Minister for Education, Training & Skills and Minister for Police and South Australian Skills Commissioner, Cameron Baker as well as numerous stakeholders who contribute to our events and advocacy initiatives.

### **Closing Reflections**

In last year's Gala Dinner address, we committed to increasing AEN SA's visibility and impact. The results are clear: AEN SA is open for business— and South Australia has responded.

With strengthened governance, exceptional member commitment, and a rapidly growing profile, the association is well-positioned to continue shaping the future of apprenticeships and traineeships in South Australia.





## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BY IRENE WALKER, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Western Australia continues to lead the nation economically, maintaining its position as the strongest state for the past five years, with consistently low unemployment rates. This stability provides a solid foundation for our members and the growth of apprenticeships and traineeships across the state.

AEN WA began the financial year with 21 strong members, each contributing to the vitality of our network.

In October, we proudly hosted our Awards for Excellence, an exclusive celebration attended by 155 guests. The event showcased highly competitive entrants – exceptional apprentices and trainees whose dedication and achievements set the benchmark for excellence.

We extend heartfelt thanks to host employers for their vital role in supporting our members and nurturing talent, and to our generous sponsors, whose contributions make these celebrations possible.

Congratulations to all our members for the outstanding recognitions achieved this year.

- **Duke of Edinburgh Awards:** A record three wins for WA members.
  - + Two apprentices from WPC Group with inspiring automotive stories that will no doubt boost their careers; and
  - + An outstanding MIGAS trainee who was also named a State Trainee of the Year finalist.
- **WorldSkills Competition:** Six talented individuals represented WA at the 47th WorldSkills, supported by the WA Government. Special congratulations to our member, NextGen Skills, for their employee earning a Medallion for Excellence in painting and decorating.
- **Training Awards:** MTA WA Training Inc. won gold at the 2024 WA State Training Awards as the Large Training Provider of the Year and Bronze at the Australian Training Awards in the same category.

This year, our advocacy highlights focused on:

- Harmonisation of Labour Hire Laws – seeking exemptions for WA GTOs
- Petitioning the state government for funding support for adult apprentices
- Seeking expansion of the Group Training Wage Subsidy program

While advocacy efforts were impacted by the WA State Election in March and the Federal Election in May, we achieved significant outcomes following the reinstatement of the WA Labor Government.

The WA Government's Skills and TAFE portfolio delivered strong support for trade and non-trade employment:

- \$100M to keep TAFE courses low-cost or free, including \$22M for additional free courses to train more tradies
- \$34M for modern TAFE equipment
- \$25.2M to expand the Group Training Organisation Wage Subsidy Program (225 new apprentice/trainee places)
- \$17M for Heavy Vehicle Driver Training
- \$12M to grow defence industry apprenticeships
- \$8M to support mature-aged apprentices (expected to rise ~48% by FY27-28)

Additional initiatives include a \$50M Battery Manufacturing Program and targeted incentives for hospitality, tourism, agriculture, and Aboriginal businesses.

The success of Group Training in Western Australia reflects the combined advocacy efforts of the National Apprentice Employment Network and Apprentice Employment Network WA. I especially acknowledge the exceptional leadership of Stuart and Iain, our Chair and Deputy Chair, whose guidance drives our advocacy initiatives alongside our Management Committee. Our sincere thanks to all our members for their support and trust in our mission to champion their interests. Together, we remain committed to advancing the prospects of apprentices and trainees across Western Australia.



## TASMANIA

BY DAVID FAGAN, CEO, TASMANIAN BUILDING GROUP APPRENTICE SCHEME

It has been a busy year for Apprentice Employment Network Tasmania (AENT), with all organisations within our network involved in various work and collaboration with government, businesses, schools and TAFE across the state.

Some key programs of work for this year include:

### **Department of Employment & Workplace Relations**

- Skills for Education and Employment Program

### **Department of State Growth**

- Training and Work Pathway Program
- Apprentice and Trainee Fund
- Building a Skilled Workforce
- NECA Training and Careers Facilitator - engaging with schools across Tasmania to promote careers in the electrotechnology sector.
- Renewable energy technologies and work force planning requirements for future projects
- Women in Construction and Clean Energy projects

**Department of Education and Young people:**

- TACC partnering with TAFE Automotive to develop enhanced Qualifications program delivery for the industry
- TasBGAS Student Career Pathways in Construction and Skill set programs
- Work & Training -26 Ten Project for LLN
- Work & Training - Indigenous Children and Schooling Programme – New Era Opportunities
- NECA partnering with TAFE Electrical- for post trade training in clean energy transition

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our members, who have worked tirelessly this year to assist Tasmanian businesses, and to create career opportunities for young Tasmanians, across multiple industries statewide.

The success of Group Training in Tasmania can be attributed to the development of strong relationships with the State Government; Skills Tasmania, the Department of Education and Young People; and most importantly our Board and Member Group Training Organisations, who work tirelessly to promote apprenticeships, traineeships, and the virtues of the Group Training model.

**VICTORIA****BY GARY WORKMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

This year the association celebrates its 40th anniversary, with many of our members having been there from the very start of the group training initiative in the 1980's.

We have consistently observed that Group Training Organisations excel compared to other employers in areas such as safety, participation, diversity, and completion rates.

Work will continue into the second half of 2025 on the recommendations for the Victorian Apprenticeship Taskforce and the Australian Apprenticeship Incentives reviews and AEN will continue to advocate on specific areas for improvement including;

- School based apprenticeships – and how GTOs can better support schools and local employers transitioning from school to work.
- Greater support for regional and SME employers
- New Victorian GTO funding model for 2025-28

2025-26 will see the government continue to roll out programs across Victoria focused on

- Social housing,
- Renewable energy / net zero, and
- Ongoing major infrastructure projects like Suburban Rail loop, Metro tunnel, Westgate Tunnel and EastLink.

Thank you to our members as the association celebrates our 40th year anniversary, the GTO model continues to showcase the best practices and outcomes for apprenticeships in Australia.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our members, the AEN Board, and staff, for their support throughout the year. I look forward to working with you as we support the network and promote the benefits of the Apprenticeship Employment Network.





## LIFE MEMBERS

Three of group training's most distinguished figures were awarded coveted Life Membership during the 2024-25.

**Stuart Diepeveen**, General Manager of Electrical Group Training (EGT). Stuart represents Western Australia on the NAEN Board of Directors. He was elected as Deputy Chair in 2014 and served as Chair from 2015 to 2018.

**Di Menz**, Chief Executive Officer of Murray Mallee Training Company, and Sunraysia Murray Group Training.

**Stephen Craven**, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer at Smart Apprenticeship Solutions in Queensland.

NAEN congratulates Stuart, Di and Stephen and extends its immense appreciation for their enormous contribution to group training in Australia.

There are 21 Life Members who have received Life Membership since it commenced in 1996.

## CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP RECOGNITION



## AustralianSuper

The National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN) is proud to recognise AustralianSuper for its outstanding support and partnership during the financial year. As one of Australia's largest superannuation funds, AustralianSuper has been a vital advocate for enhancing financial literacy and providing valuable insights into superannuation for NAEN members and stakeholders.

In 2024-25, AustralianSuper made significant contributions by engaging with NAEN members through a variety of events and initiatives. These included delivering education sessions at the NAEN 2024 and NAEN 2025 Member Luncheons, hosting insightful presentations during these two conferences, participating in virtual events, and contributing to discussions at board meetings and other strategic engagements throughout the financial year.

Their expert guidance equipped members with the knowledge and tools to better understand both the economy, superannuation, and its importance in securing financial well-being for apprentices, trainees, and employers alike.

AustralianSuper's proactive involvement not only reflects their commitment to supporting the apprenticeship and traineeship sector but also highlights their dedication to empowering the broader workforce with financial confidence and knowledge. Their collaboration has been integral to fostering informed decision-making among NAEN members and promoting sustainable outcomes for the industries we serve.

NAEN extends its deepest appreciation to AustralianSuper for their Corporate Partnership and Platinum NAEN 2024 and NAEN 2025 Conference Partnership, and their commitment to building a financially literate and resilient apprentice and trainee workforce. We look forward to continuing this valued relationship in the years to come.



## OUR MEMBERS

1300apprentice	<a href="http://www.1300apprentice.com.au">www.1300apprentice.com.au</a>
AGA	<a href="http://www.aga.com.au">www.aga.com.au</a>
Ai Group Apprentice & Trainee Centre	<a href="http://www.aigroupapprentices.com.au">www.aigroupapprentices.com.au</a>
Apprenticeship Careers Australia	<a href="http://www.apprenticeshipcareers.com.au">www.apprenticeshipcareers.com.au</a>
Apprenticeships Are Us Limited	<a href="http://www.apprus.com.au">www.apprus.com.au</a>
Apprenticeships Queensland	<a href="http://www.appqld.com.au">www.appqld.com.au</a>
ARCWay Careers	<a href="http://www.arcwaycareers.com.au">www.arcwaycareers.com.au</a>
ATEC Group Training	<a href="http://www.atec.asn.au">www.atec.asn.au</a>
Australian Training Company (ATC)	<a href="http://www.austrg.com.au">www.austrg.com.au</a>
Australian Training Works	<a href="http://www.atw.org.au">www.atw.org.au</a>
Career Employment Group Inc	<a href="http://www.ceg.net.au">www.ceg.net.au</a>
Central Coast Group Training	<a href="http://www.ccgat.com.au">www.ccgat.com.au</a>
Community Solutions Group Ltd	<a href="http://www.communitysolutions.org.au">www.communitysolutions.org.au</a>
East Coast Apprenticeships	<a href="http://www.ecapprenticeships.com.au">www.ecapprenticeships.com.au</a>
Electrical Group Training	<a href="http://www.egt.net.au">www.egt.net.au</a>
Electro Group (NSW)	<a href="http://www.egt.com.au">www.egt.com.au</a>
Golden West Apprenticeships Ltd	<a href="http://www.goldenwest.org.au">www.goldenwest.org.au</a>
Group Training Employment (GTE)	<a href="http://www.gte.org.au">www.gte.org.au</a>
GTNT Group	<a href="http://www.gtntgroup.com.au">www.gtntgroup.com.au</a>
Hospitality Group Training (WA)	<a href="http://www.hgtwa.com.au">www.hgtwa.com.au</a>
Housing Industry Association	<a href="http://www.hia.com.au">www.hia.com.au</a>
HTN	<a href="http://www.htn.com.au">www.htn.com.au</a>
HunterNet Career Connections	<a href="http://www.hunternet.com.au">www.hunternet.com.au</a>
Zeal Futures	<a href="http://www.zealfutures.com.au">www.zealfutures.com.au</a>
IAHA Group Training	<a href="http://www.iaha.com.au">www.iaha.com.au</a>
Kestrel Recruitment	<a href="http://www.kestrelrecruitment.com.au">www.kestrelrecruitment.com.au</a>





National Apprentice  
Employment Network

Kimberley Group Training Inc	<a href="http://www.kgt.org.au">www.kgt.org.au</a>
Master Builders Apprentices (SA)	<a href="http://www.mbasa.com.au/apprentices">www.mbasa.com.au/apprentices</a> Master
Builders Apprenticeship Service (NSW)	<a href="http://www.mbanw.asn.au">www.mbanw.asn.au</a>
Maxima Group Training	<a href="http://www.maxima.com.au">www.maxima.com.au</a>
MEGT	<a href="http://www.megt.com.au">www.megt.com.au</a>
METL	<a href="http://www.metl.com.au">www.metl.com.au</a>
MIGAS	<a href="http://www.migas.com.au">www.migas.com.au</a>
MRAEL	<a href="http://www.mrael.com.au">www.mrael.com.au</a>
Murray Mallee Training Co Ltd	<a href="http://www.mmtc.com.au">www.mmtc.com.au</a>
Murraylands Training & Employment	<a href="http://www.mtesa.com.au">www.mtesa.com.au</a>
MyGateway	<a href="http://www.mygateway.org.au">www.mygateway.org.au</a>
NECA Education and Careers	<a href="http://www.necaeducation.com.au">www.necaeducation.com.au</a>
NECA Electrical Apprenticeships	<a href="http://www.necatrainng.com.au">www.necatrainng.com.au</a>
NextGen Jobs	<a href="http://www.nextgenjobs.org.au">www.nextgenjobs.org.au</a>
Novaskill	<a href="http://www.novaskill.com.au">www.novaskill.com.au</a>
OSMAC Group Training Pty Ltd	<a href="http://www.ogt.com.au">www.ogt.com.au</a>
PEER	<a href="http://www.peer.com.au">www.peer.com.au</a>
Prestige Staffing Solutions	<a href="http://www.prestigestaffingsolutions.org.au">www.prestigestaffingsolutions.org.au</a>
Skillset Ltd	<a href="http://www.skillset.com.au">www.skillset.com.au</a>
Smart Employment Solutions Ltd	<a href="http://www.sasat.com.au">www.sasat.com.au</a>
Squad	<a href="http://www.squad.org.au">www.squad.org.au</a>
Statewide Apprenticeships	<a href="http://www.sgt.asn.au">www.sgt.asn.au</a>
Sunraysia & Murray Group Training (SMGT)	<a href="http://www.smgt.com.au">www.smgt.com.au</a>
TAPS – Trainee & Apprentice Placement Service	<a href="http://www.tapssa.com.au">www.tapssa.com.au</a>
TasBGAS	<a href="http://www.tasbgas.com.au">www.tasbgas.com.au</a>
The Apprentice and Traineeship Company	<a href="http://www.atcemployment.com.au">www.atcemployment.com.au</a>
Victorian Group Training Company (VGTC)	<a href="http://www.vgtc.org.au">www.vgtc.org.au</a>
Work & Training Ltd	<a href="http://www.workandtraining.com.au">www.workandtraining.com.au</a>
WPC Group Limited	<a href="http://www.wpcgroup.org.au">www.wpcgroup.org.au</a>



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