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ABOUT NAEN

WHO WE ARE

The National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN) is Australia's largest employer network of apprentices and trainees.

Across metropolitan, rural, regional and remote Australia, the network employs some 25,000 apprentices and trainees in a diverse range of industries.

The employer network is unique, as it represents the practice of Group Training under which Group Training Organisations (GTOs) directly employ apprentices and trainees and place them with host businesses.

Under this arrangement, GTOs are responsible for selecting and recruiting apprentices and trainees, matching them to host businesses, meeting all employer obligations including paying wages and entitlements, arranging formal training and assessment, and providing pastoral care and support throughout the engagement.

NAEN BOARD

Name	Board Position	Organisation
David Nagy	Chair SA Representative	Maxima Group
Sharon Smith	Deputy Chair	HVTC
lain McDougall	Member Representative	Hospitality Group Training WA Inc
Geoff Fader	TAS Representative (until March 2020)	Tasmanian Building Group Apprentice Scheme
Stuart Diepeveen	WA Representative	Electrical Group Training
Tom Emeleus	Member Representative	NECA Electrical Apprenticeships (NSW/QLD/ACT)
Megan Lilly	Member Representative	Australian Industry Group
Tom Mangan	QLD/NT Representative	Community Solutions Group
Bridie Gildea	Member Representative	MEGT
Kathryn Stenson	Member Representative	GTNT Group
David Fagan	TAS Representative (from June 2020)	Tasmanian Building Group Apprentice Scheme

SUB-COMMITTEES

AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE	GOVERNANCE SUB-COMMITTEE
Stuart Diepeveen (Chair)	Stuart Diepeveen (Chair)
lain McDougall	Sharon Smith
Sharon Smith	Tom Emeleus
David Nagy	David Nagy

BOARD BIOGRAPHIES

DAVID NAGY, CHAIR



David is General Manager, Recruitment and Training at Maxima, and was appointed NAEN Chair in April 2019. He has been on the Board of NAEN since early 2018 and has served on the Board of AEN (South Australia) since 2014 and been its Chair since 2015. Originally employed at Maxima in 2003 as Marketing Coordinator, David has spent more than 17 years in the group training sector. He studied at the University of Adelaide and graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce (Hons). David has a passion for the group training sector and for the transformative role of apprenticeships and traineeships for both individuals and host businesses.

SHARON SMITH, DEPUTY CHAIR



Sharon is the CEO of HVTC, a position she has held since 2012. She has an outstanding record of achievement over 20 years as a senior executive in the utilities, regional development and private sectors. This includes Chief Financial Officer and General Manager in various roles leading large operational and shared services teams across Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Procurement and Business Development.

Sharon has significant experience working with Boards of Directors in developing and executing strategy including Hunter Water Corporation, Hunter Water Australia, Regional Land Management Corporation and as former Non-Executive Director of Hunter Development Corporation, Hunter Business Chamber and current Director of the Hunter Trade College and Coleambally Irrigation Cooperative Limited.

IAIN MCDOUGALL



lain is the General Manager of Hospitality Group Training WA Inc, joining this organisation in 1995 after 20 years' senior management experience with the Federal Government mainly in training policy. He is the Nominated Member for Western Australia to the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) - composed of industry leaders nominated by Commonwealth and state and territory ministers responsible for skills and training. Iain is former Chair of Group Training Australia, currently Deputy Chair of AENWA, and a Member of the NAEN Board Audit Sub-Committee. Iain is also a Member of the Tourism, Travel and Hospitality Industry Reference Committee (IRC) and Board Member of FutureNow, the Creative and Leisure Industry Training Council.

GEOFF FADER



Geoff is the Executive Officer of the Apprenticeship Employment Network, Tasmania, and an NAEN Life Member. He is a founding figure in the group training sector, having played a key role in its inception some 40 years ago and served in a range of positions including a founding chair of a group training organisation, a director on the first national board and later Chair of Group Training Australia. Geoff was made a Life Member of (then) Group Training Australia in 2001. He serves as Chair of the Board's Marketing and Communications Committee. Geoff has also supported numerous organisations associated with the development of concept and policy advice to government and the implementation of a wide range of community activities.

STUART DIEPEVEEN



Stuart is General Manager Electrical Group Training (EGT), a not-for-profit group training organisation and the largest employer of electrical apprentices in Western Australia. Stuart began his career as an apprentice with EGT in the mid-1990s, after which he became a Production Supervisor and Workplace Safety Coordinator at a local renewable energy company. In 2004 he moved into training and became an instructor at the College of Electrical Training before moving to EGT as a field officer in 2005. After being promoted to Operations Manager late in 2005, in 2007 Stuart took on the role of General Manager at EGT, the role he still holds today.

TOM EMELEUS



Tom is General Manager 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 2500 apprentices in that time. In his current role, Tom is responsible for NECA's group training and training businesses in NSW, Queensland and the ACT. Over the last 15 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 VET to government, the media, industry and the community.

MEGAN LILLY



Megan Lilly is the Head of Education & Training for The Australian Industry Group (Ai Group) and Managing Director of the Australian Industry Group Training Services (AiGTS). In this role Megan is responsible for the development of all education and training policy as well as the operation of the group training organisations. Ms Lilly is a member of the Australian Industry Skills Committee, board member of National Apprentice Employment Network, Deputy Chair – Worldskills Australia, member of the Australian College of Educators, the Australia Pacific Training Coalition, and the Naval Shipbuilding College – Delivery Advisory Committee. Megan was also on the AQF Review Panel. She has been a member of the Australia India Education Council, including Chairing the Skills Working Group, Australian Qualifications Framework Council, Queensland Ministerial Commission, Victorian Skills Commission and was a member of the National Skills Standards Council, and the National Quality Council.

TOM MANGAN



Tom is General Manager of the Community Solutions Group, a subsidiary of Endeavour Foundation. Community Solutions Group includes Acclaim, SkillsPlus, BRACE Education and Training, and TORGAS Apprentices and Trainees, delivering a diverse range of workforce, education, training, community wellbeing and NDIS services throughout Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. Tom has over 30 years' experience in leadership roles in the employment, banking, finance and building products sectors before joining Community Solutions six years ago. Tom is a graduate of the University of NSW, Australian Institute of Company Directors, Griffith University Business School and The Securities Institute of Australia.

BRIDIE GILDEA



Bridie has over 25 years of experience in the Vocational Education and Training sector, in which seven and a half of those have been with MEGT. Bridie has extensive knowledge of the Australian Network Provider (ANP) and Group Training industries. After working within a GTO focussed environments in North Eastern Victoria for eleven and a half years, Bridie relocated to Melbourne and commenced her journey with MEGT as the ANP State Manager in March 2013. During her time in this role, Bridie's leadership, her knowledge of the vocational education and training sector, and expertise in relation to business acumen and ability to influence change and business modelling were quickly identified, and as a result, she transitioned to the General Manager, ANP in December 2013. Bridie continued in this role until June 2019, when she was appointed as Chief Executive Officer (Acting) (CEO) and CEO in January 2020.

KATHRYN STENSON



Kathryn is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of GTNT Group which is a multi-faceted not for profit that began operation in 1989 as a Group Training Organisation in Darwin. GTNT Group has since expanded to include four office locations, the operation of a registered training organisation, a local café, and an international charity. Kathryn joined GTNT Group as CEO in 2013, bringing with her 20 years of experience in employment industries with a strong background in governance, strategic planning, management, and business development. Kathryn in addition to being a director for the National Apprentice Employment Network also sits on the Boards of the National Australian Apprenticeships Association, the Apprenticeship Employment Network, and the Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

DAVID FAGAN



David is CEO of the Tasmanian Building group Apprenticeship Scheme and was appointed to NAEN board in 2020. He has served on the Board of AEN (Tasmania) since 2015 and has occupied the role of Chair or Deputy Chair since 2017. David has six years in the group training sector and prior to this had 27 years in the banking and finance sector. He studied at the Deakin University and graduated with a Diploma of HR. David has a passion for the group training sector and for the transformative role of apprenticeships and traineeships for both individuals and host businesses.



STAFF

DIANNE DAYHEW Chief Executive Officer

GRACE TEMPLETON Administration and Project Officer (until August 2019)

TERRY ANDISON Indigenous Projects Managers (until January 2020)

KRISTEN SYDNEY Executive Support and Project Officer (from January 2020)

CONTRACTED SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

BOB BOWDEN Communications Advisor

KEN LANCERO Company Accountant

ANGIIE TURAY Programs Support



OUR MISSION

- To advance a new paradigm for group training being the arrangement of quality work-based learning which is supported by professionally managed pastoral care and regulated by national standards
- To champion the successes of Group Training Organisations (GTOs) including their reversal
 of youth unemployment, creating and supporting equitable and inclusive career pathways
 and facilitating successful new career transitions for displaced workers, during and post the
 COVID-19 environment
- To be the first point of contact for the Australian Government as the voice for the national GTO network informing evidence-based government policy on work-based learning
- To promote the benefits of group training to our existing and future stakeholders through directing government investment to facilitate greater employment and skills outcomes through group training
- To support our members through a cohesive, thriving and connected network providing valueadded information and relevant and timely business opportunities



CHAIR'S REPORT

It has been another year of success and growth for the National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN), notwithstanding the challenges that have beset many parts of the country, including the group training sector.

None of us expected that we would be facing a major health pandemic, an economic collapse, and a crisis in apprentice employment.

I am pleased to say that the role of the national body has come to the fore in these difficult times, as it has helped support scores of GTOs as they have endured some of the most challenging conditions in memory.

The year has seen us strengthen our position with expanded membership and influence in the development of policies that support apprentice and trainee employment.

The development of a new strategic plan has underpinned our future direction, with a clear goal of building a cohesive, thriving and connected network that adds value to members through critical information and timely business opportunities.

It also sets out a clear mandate to pursue government investment in the sector to facilitate greater employment and improved skills outcomes through group training.

Members are at the centre of everything that we do – providing useful intelligence, resources and tools; supporting professional development; advocating on their behalf; and building the national profile of the work of group training.

Since the end of 2019 when bushfires struck, followed by the outbreak of COVID-19, the role of the national body has been more important than ever. I am extremely proud of the way NAEN mobilised to help support GTOs by getting them the information they vitally need, while ensuring policy makers were fully informed about what was happening on the ground.

It is in times of crisis that the real value of the national network comes to the fore. I also acknowledge the tremendous work of state and territory Apprentice Employment Networks which have played an invaluable part in helping their members and contributing to the national effort.

The 2019-20 period also saw some major changes on the national VET agenda, including Budget initiatives to drive VET reform and the commencement of the National Skills Commission and the National Careers Institute – bodies that will play an increasingly important part in transforming and modernising the vocational education system.

I am pleased to see the voice of group training playing a key part in these discussions. The reach and influence of the sector was on display at the successful 'Beyond 2020' national conference, and NAEN plays a key part in a range of forums such as the Commonwealth VET Stakeholder Committee. My thanks extend to the Ministers, staff and dedicated departmental officials who NAEN works with on a regular basis.

I would like to thank the small, hard-working team at NAEN, headed by CEO Dianne Dayhew, who have made great achievements and performed incredibly, especially during the pandemic and the associated economic fallout.

It is heartening to see our membership steadily growing – a testament to the value we strive to deliver.

I also extend my thanks to fellow Board members, including new members, who bring diversity, strength, time, passion and incredible knowledge to our decisions and direction.

It has been a year of considerable achievement at a time of enormous uncertainty.

I am very confident that we will see further success in the coming year, and that we will look back upon 2019-20 as one where the value of the national network shone through.

David Nagy

Chair



CEO'S REPORT

It has been an extraordinary year for the country and for the group training sector, with bushfires, the health pandemic and the economic recession producing unprecedented business disruption.

The 2019-20 year commenced with much anticipation following the May 2019 federal election, which saw added impetus behind the VET reform agenda, driven by the Joyce Review of VET.

NAEN was quickly off the mark in cementing relationships with new ministers, staff and departmental officials presiding over the re-shaping of the VET sector. NAEN was pleased to be one of 17 organisations named on the Commonwealth's VET Stakeholder Committee which is designed to provide feedback on the progress of VET reform.

As always, member GTOs play a key role in providing input and insights that help support the national body to do its job in advocating on behalf of the apprenticeship sector.

A number of new members signed up during the year, continuing the recent trend of building a broader, more diverse membership base across industry sectors and across the states and territories.

NAEN held a well-attended and very successful national conference, 'Beyond 2020' at the Gold Coast, which brough together GTOs from around the country to hear a diverse group of speakers, and discuss the key issues confronting the VET sector and group training.

The entire country was shocked at the scale of the bushfires that hit parts of eastern Australia late in 2019. Like many in the affected regions, group training employers, host businesses and their apprentices and trainees were severely impacted.

NAEN was able to work closely with the state and territory Apprentice Employment Networks and with governments and government agencies to ensure that GTOs and their apprentices and trainees were supported.

The smoke had barely cleared when the first hint of the COVID-19 health crisis emerged in the first quarter of 2020, but it quickly became clear that Australia faced a challenge like none in recent times.

The unfolding economic and business fallout saw the Prime Minister unveil the initial economic support package, with apprentices and trainees at the forefront of the response.

NAEN had been working with ministers, staff and officials to help them understand the full impacts among GTOs and this resulted in the government announcing that NAEN would be funded to establish the Apprentice and Trainee Re-engagement Register to help re-engage displaced apprentices and trainees.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 in March 2020 saw the widescale shutdown of businesses, and thousands of apprentices and trainees stood down. Again, the group training network – GTOs, state and territory AENs and host employers – all rallied to help their apprentices and trainees. It was magnificent to see the way everyone responded quickly and cooperatively to assess the impacts and work actively to protect the livelihoods of the mostly young people under threat.

NAEN was able to use the information, data and the deep knowledge of the network to inform government as it went about developing responses. Through numerous face-to-face meetings, phone conversations, letters and emails, the group training position was conveyed to the highest levels of government. The position was also articulated in a policy paper, 'Dealing with the Apprenticeship Emergency', prepared by NAEN and delivered to the Prime Minister and Ministers.

While thousands of apprentices and trainees were suspended and stood down during the crisis, the situation could have been far worse without the financial support that became available. We remain acutely aware of the fallout – emotional and financial – and the disproportionate impact on many young people. This will remain our focus over the coming year.

We all know that apprentices and trainees are at the heart of every CEO, every field officer, and all of us who cherish group training. So, it was a joy to be able to advise that the renowned group training professional development program, Today's Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders, which ran from 2004 until 2016, will return in 2021. In partnership with the National Careers Institute, leading group training apprentices and trainees along with selected Australian Training Award recipients will participate in the week-long residential program in Canberra.

It was also a pleasure to be able to extend our work in Indigenous employment, with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) approving NAEN's application to place 450 people into traineeships, apprenticeships and direct employment. This continues a longstanding record of GTOs working with Indigenous Australians to secure quality training and employment.

Over the course of the year, I believe that the reputation and standing of group training has been enhanced in the eyes of government, industry and the community. I have been gratified by the many messages of support that I have received for the work of GTOs in a most challenging year.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Chair and the Board of NAEN who bring a vast repository of knowledge and a readiness to weigh in and support the national body at every opportunity.

I also acknowledge the work of state and territory AENs whose on-the-ground knowledge and experience is second to none. The staff and contractors who support NAEN and its members have also played a critical role in ensuring our success.

I know that all those who work in the group training sector have endured a difficult period. But what has been clear to me is power of a network that was borne in challenging times and, indeed, designed to provide a safety net in times of uncertainty.

When it works cooperatively and for a clear purpose, group training's original mission remains as strong as ever.

Dianne Dayhew

Chief Executive Officer



ADVOCACY

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The 2019-20 year was a particularly active one in for advocacy work, particularly in the area of government relations.

Following the May 2019 federal election, NAEN held a series of meetings with senior federal ministers, MPs and departmental officials as part of its advocacy on behalf of the apprenticeship network.

The return of the Morrison government, the appointment of a new skills minister and the reorganisation of the department responsible for VET and apprenticeships saw a host of new personnel in key roles.

One of the first engagements was a meeting with the newly appointed Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships, Steve Irons.

NAEN also met with many government and opposition MPs, including some of the "class of 2019" – the new MPs who won seats at the May election.

The post-election period saw the Commonwealth Department of Education's Apprenticeship Branch merge with the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business (DoESSFB).

At this time, NAEN was also named as one of 17 organisations on the newly formed Vocational Education and Training (VET) Stakeholder Committee, designed to provide feedback on implementing the key federal government skills reform package – Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow.

This group was a direct response to the Joyce Review and meets monthly in Canberra.

GROUP TRAINING 'COMPLETION RATES' STUDY

NAEN was consulted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research in 2019 regarding a landmark piece of work it was undertaking into the issue of completion rates for apprentices and trainees engaged through GTOs, compared to those in direct employment.

NAEN was able to assist NCVER researchers with data and information from the group training network, as well as suggestions for specific GTOs for the purpose of obtaining more detailed information and case studies.

The NCVER study, 'Completion rates for group training organisations and direct employers: how do they compare?' was published in October 2019.

Its key finding stated: "After accounting for the different demographic profiles of GTO apprentices and trainees and employer size, the study shows that GTO completion rates for all apprentices and trainees are substantially higher than for small and medium direct employers."

Importantly, the study observed that the profile of GTO apprentices and trainees includes a higher proportion of disadvantaged or 'high risk' cohorts commencing apprenticeships and traineeships.

This was a critical piece of work that demonstrated the intrinsic value added through key group training activities including selection, matching, rotation, mentoring and support. The findings have been widely circulated among key policy makers.

POLICY PAPER – 'DEALING WITH THE APPRENTICESHIP EMERGENCY'

NAEN delivered a number of recommendations to the federal government to deal with the challenges faced by the group training amid the COVID crisis.

The report, 'Dealing with the Apprenticeship Emergency', was prepared by NAEN, based on feedback from member GTOs during the COVID-19 economic downturn.

The report emphasised that while government support was proving helpful for many GTOs, there were real concerns at how the sector would fare once these supports were removed, and how apprentice and trainee numbers would respond.

The report was delivered to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and key portfolio ministers for consideration as part of the government's review of industry assistance, and ahead of the planned economic and fiscal update in July 2020.

The key recommendations were:

- Wage support of \$500 per apprentice, per week to be extended, in the form of the JobKeeper model to all employers of apprentices and trainees.
- · Introduction of direct annual GTO funding
- The government to mandate a minimum 10 per cent employment requirement for apprentices and trainees on all Commonwealth projects.

RESPONSE TO THE BUSHFIRE EMERGENCY



Bushfires affected many parts of the country late in 2020.

This saw emergency and disaster declarations in place in parts of Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

There was an immediate impact on GTOs, apprentices, trainees and host businesses in the worst affected areas, with many businesses forced to temporarily close and lay off employees.

NAEN worked closely with state AENs to monitor the situation and keep track of the shutdowns and layoffs affecting group training operations. Information from the bushfire-hit areas was also passed through to governments so that assistance and support measures could be developed and implemented.

The scale and severity of the fires threw up a host of workplace issues, not only in the immediate vicinity, but in downstream industries where supply chains and employees were impacted.

NAEN, in conjunction with its workplace adviser, WorkSight, issued a range of advisory notices to GTOs to help in managing workplace issues during the emergency.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread to Australia in early 2020, governments began more sustained liaison with industry on the impacts of the virus and ways to support businesses.

NAEN was engaged with federal ministers and departments in the lead up to the first support measure, 'Supporting Apprentices and Trainees' announced in early March 2020.

The initiative provided a subsidy of 50 per cent of an apprentice's or trainee's wage for an eligible small business and was aimed at helping 120,000 apprentices and trainees to remain in their jobs.

The situation became more serious in late March as COVID-19 infections spread and the first shutdowns were announced in New South Wales, Victorian and the Australian Capital Territory.

The establishment of the National Cabinet underlined the grave, cross-border impacts of the pandemic and saw the unprecedented shutdown of non-essential services including most of the hospitality sector.

Almost overnight, tens of thousands of businesses employing apprentices and trainees had shut their doors or their activities were effectively on hold. The positions of thousands of apprentices and trainees were also in jeopardy.

The escalating crisis prompted the first in a series of government responses – a \$66 billion economic and business support package. It became clear that the health crisis was morphing into an economic crisis, and the magnitude of the downturn was likely to be greater than any in recent decades.

The support package also saw the announcement by Prime Minister Scott Morrison of funding to NAEN, as the peak national body representing GTOs, to co-ordinate the re-employment of displaced apprentices and trainees through the Apprentice and Trainee Re-engagement Register.

NAEN was working closely with state and territory AENs in gathering information and data from the frontline of the group training sector, and in constant dialogue with ministers and departmental officials on the unfolding crisis.

NAEN also worked with the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to ensure that officials were fully aware of the potential for a massive loss of jobs and capability in the apprentice sector.

In late March, the prime minister announced the huge \$130 billion JobKeeper scheme, providing a \$1500 a fortnight payment to eligible employees.

NAEN received many questions from members regarding the apprentice support payments and JobKeeper, and worked with the Department to address specific questions relevant to the GTO network.

In order to address some of the pressing financial and business questions for GTOs, NAEN engaged business advisory and accounting firm ESV in April to host the first of a series of webinars to explain the measures and answer questions from members.

In dealing with JobKeeper, one of the critical issues that faced a number of GTOs was a situation where a host employer was eligible for the payment, but the GTO was not, meaning that the apprentices and trainees (legally employed by the GTO) would not attract the payment.

Following detailed discussions with the government, the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash advised an extension of the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees measure to help rectify the situation.

It saw the government increase the value of the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees wage subsidy to \$1,500 per fortnight for GTOs, where the host employer was receiving JobKeeper.

Throughout the pandemic and the economic response to it, the feedback and input from GTOs was vital in helping to develop and fine tune the policy response from government. With events moving at a rapid pace, the expertise and insights from NAEN members helped ensure that the group training voice was heard and responded to at the highest levels of government.

We are grateful, in particular, to the Prime Minister, Ministers Cash and Irons and their staff, and to the officials at the Department of Education, Skills and Employment who have all been accessible, helpful and genuinely concerned to help the sector at this very difficult time.

GTO PROTECTION AGAINST HOST BUSINESS BANKRUPTCY

NAEN has continued its efforts to secure greater protection for GTOs against host business bankruptcy and insolvency.

For around two decades, the sector has sought secured creditor status for the money owed to a GTO from a host business for the wages paid to apprentices. Under the bankruptcy and insolvency laws, this element of monies owing has no ranking other than as an unsecured creditor.

During the year, NAEN continued its efforts to arrive at a satisfactory solution.

In March NAEN provided members with a draft letter of concern, setting out the issue, to be sent to local MPs.

There have also been discussions regarding an alternative to changing bankruptcy and insolvency laws.

One such proposal entails use of the Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR), an official government register that serves a public noticeboard of security interests in personal property. Some GTOs have amended their contracts with host businesses to include PPSR protection to secure monies owing.

NAEN continues to explore all options to achieve a better outcome to this longstanding issue.



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

WEBINARS

In direct response to the economic challenges posed by the pandemic, NAEN hosted several webinars to support members with important advice and information.

JOBKEEPER INFORMATION WEBINAR

In order to address some of the pressing financial and business questions for GTOs, NAEN engaged business advisory and accounting firm ESV in April to host the first of a series of webinars to explain the measures and answer questions from members.

WHAT THE COVID-19 CRISIS MEANS FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

NAEN joined with the National Australian Apprenticeships Association and the Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships Information Service in April to discuss the way the COVID-19 crisis would impact apprenticeships.

MEMBER ALERTS AND NEWSLETTERS

NAEN kept members regularly updated with information via Member Alerts throughout the year.

A total of 61 Member Alerts were sent covering a range of topics, including VET reform initiatives, key ministerial and departmental personnel changes, news of upcoming programs and government tenders, and vital information relating to eligibility for programs such as JobKeeper and apprentice support payments.

NAEN also published regular newsletters to both members and stakeholders covering topics of intertest across the group training network and the VET sector, more widely.

'BEYOND 2020' NAEN CONFERENCE 2019

The NAEN National Conference, 'Beyond 2020' was held at the Queensland Gold Coast from 31 July to 2 August 2019.

It attracted a broad range of members, non-members, key stakeholders, sponsors and exhibitors, with a theme focused on preparing Group Training Organisations for a future impacted by a newly formed government and a reform agenda based around the Joyce Review of VET.

Parliamentary speakers included The Hon Steve Irons MP, Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships; The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Shadow Minister for Skills; and Meaghan Scanlon MP, Queensland Assistant Minister for Tourism Industry Development.

Other speakers included The Hon. Steven Joyce, author of the Joyce Review of VET; Stephen Koukoulas, economist; and Michael McQueen, futurist, trends expert and business strategist.

Delegate numbers more than doubled from the previous conference, from 77 to 147, and the event ran at a profit.

The occasion provided the opportunity for a number of supplementary events, including an AEN Executive Officer meeting and dinner; an NAEN Board meeting held at TAFE Gold Coast; a Members Luncheon at Kurrawa Surf Club; and a State Training Authority / AEN Round Table. A very successful and well attended Conference Dinner was hosted with TAFE Queensland at Dreamworld.

Feedback showed that on a scale of 1 to 5 (highest), 91% rated the event either 4 or 5.







OUR PROGRAMS

NAEN INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) was established on 1 July 2019. NAEN has continued its important work with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) in previous years to support Indigenous school-based trainees, apprentices, and jobseekers through our national group training network. In 2019-20, NAEN was engaged by the NIAA to deliver four contracts under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS).

NAEN's JLEP 2018 achieved and exceeded deliverables, with higher commencements than initially contracted (277 out of 250) and 88.2% reaching their 26-week milestone. JLEP 2019 seeks to place 450 Indigenous participants across Australia, into an apprenticeship, direct employment, or a school-based traineeship (SBT). NAEN is working hard on this contract with the national GTO network to reach maximised outcomes.

Through the Indigenous School-Based Trainees / Apprentices Project (2018-2020), NAEN partnered with 19 GTOs in our national network to support 160 Indigenous Year 11 and 12 students into a Certificate III. Where possible, GTOs target their engagement of secondary schools with a lower socio-economic status. Over 151 SBTs have commenced and all active candidates supported by GTOs are on track to reach their second-year final milestone.

The Community Services Program (CSP) was novated to NAEN in July 2019. This provides funding for the placement of Indigenous participants into accredited training in Certificate III, IV or Diploma level in Early Childhood, Aged Care or Disability Services and into in the Early Childhood, Aged Care or Disability Sectors. NAEN has partnered with 14 GTOs within our national network to deliver this project and works actively with GTOs to further their engagement in the community services and health sectors through Indigenous training and employment.

APPRENTICE AND TRAINEE RE-ENGAGEMENT REGISTER

In March 2020, as part of the government's first economic stimulus package, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that NAEN was to be funded to co-ordinate the re-employment of displaced apprentices and trainees throughout its network of host employers across Australia.

This was facilitated through the establishment of the Apprentice and Trainee Re-engagement Register.

The Register enables apprentices and trainees from any small business to lodge their details and connect with an interested employer of any size, including a GTO.

GTOs and employers can post vacancies to recommence apprentices and trainees.

Candidates can search for vacancies, and GTOs and employers can search for candidates.

Employers of any size that take on a displaced apprentice or trainee may be eligible for a 50 per cent wage subsidy under the Commonwealth's Supporting Apprentices and Trainees initiative to support those impacted by COVID-19.

AASNs determine final eligibility for wage subsidies of each recommencement.

This was an important national role for NAEN and the group training network in handling laid off apprentices and trainees during the pandemic and the economic downturn.

TODAY'S SKILLS: TOMORROW'S LEADERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM TO RETURN



During the year, NAEN was successful in reaching agreement to bring back the Today's Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders (TSTL) program from 2021.

Under a partnership between NAEN and the National Careers Institute, 22 group training apprentices and trainees will take part in the flagship professional development program, along with three finalists or winners from the Australian Training Awards.

TSTL was developed and conducted by the former Group Training Australia (now NAEN) from 2004 to 2016. The week-long residential program at the Australian Institute of Sport saw more than 240 outstanding group training apprentices and trainees hone their leadership and self-management skills under expert professional guidance.

The relaunched TSTL will follow a similar format to the past, with a five-day residential program in Canberra, supplemented by a visit to Parliament House and meetings with MPs and ministers.

It represents an exciting new chapter for this highly-regarded program and a tremendous avenue to showcase the extraordinary talent of group training.

TOOLS DOWN A CHANCE TO TRAIN



LAUREN AHWAN

UT-OF-WORK apprentices should double down on their training during the coronavirus shutdown so they can return to took full-time when conditions improve.

WPC Group general manager Andrew Sezonov believes the trades industry will be among the first to recover from the pandemic and says apprentices should actively prepare for a return to work.

"A lot of trades are picking up and this will only continue as restrictions ease or as the community realises they can still go out and do things like get their car serviced," Sezonov says.

"We're strongly pushing for young apprentices to double their training while they have some downtime so that when they're back at work they can go back full-time and not worry about trade school."

However, confusion reigns over who can train during this time, with many states and territories rushing to change rules that previously Craig Robertson says it would be "helpful" if apprentices affected by coronavirus were able to complete their qualifications.

National Apprentice Employment Network chief executive Dianne Daybew agrees and says disruptions to training may trigger further skills shortage blowouts.

"I really encourage people to make contact with their training provider to see what training is available," she says.

"State governments are certainly reorganising their policies based around COVID-19 and are doing whatever they can to ensure (displaced apprentices) can access training."

A national re-engagement register has been launched to connect apprentices and trainees out of work because of coronavirus with prospective employers.

Dayhew says the register complements statebased registers and other apprentice to boards and urges out-of-work apprentices to use all avenues to increase their chances of returning to

Michael Amendola, 19, signed up to the national register after being let go by his boss in

MEDIA RELATIONS

NAEN featured in a range of mainstream, industry and social media over the course of the year.

NAEN issued media releases throughout the year on relevant topics and NAEN CEO Dianne Dayhew featured in various media articles including print publications and on radio and television news items, as well as in industry webinars. This included:

- Daily Telegraph/Herald Sun, Food for thought, July 13
- Campus Review article, 'Government's stimulus package a shot in the arm for apprentices, trainees', featuring CEO Dianne Dayhew, March 16.
- Tradeswomen Australia crowdcast Industry Panel interview with CEO Dianne Dayhew, MAS SA Manager Kara Prichard, Mar 31.
- CEO Dianne Dayhew featured on the Australian Apprenticeships & Traineeships Information Service (AATIS) with Ben Bardon, NAAA through a video conference panel interview, discussing What the COVID Crisis Means for Australian Apprenticeships on Apr 17.
- ABC AM interview with CEO Dianne Dayhew: Severe shortage of skilled workers looming, May 21.
- ABC AM interview with CEO Dianne Dayhew: Skills overhaul long overdue says industry, May 26
- ABC 7.30 featured group training apprentice, Deon Emin, referred by NAEN in its program, 'Coronavirus economic fallout could see tens of thousands of apprenticeship places disappear', May 27.

- ABC PM featured group training apprentice Jamie Lee Crawford, (referred by NAEN from 1300 Apprentice) in its program, 'Broad agreement on vocational education plans', May 26.
- CEO Dianne Dayhew featured on the Australian Apprenticeships & Traineeships Information Service (AATIS) webinar What is the Apprentice and Trainee re-engagement register? May 22.
- NAEN featured in several articles in the TAFE
 Directors Australia weekly newsletter including a
 special edition on industry responses to the Prime
 Ministers VET reform proposals.
- NAEN, in conjunction with NECA, purchased a full page 'advertorial' feature that included a half page article, 'Group training organisations are here to help', and a half page NECA ad, July 2.
- NAEN is active on social media and has posted regularly on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, where it has a total of more than 5,000 followers.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NAEN PATRON



NAEN was delighted to be advised during the year of the news that His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia had agreed to be serve as Patron.

LIFE MEMBER, ALAN SPARKS



The national conference saw the awarding of Life Membership to the Chief Executive Officer of East Coast Apprenticeships, Alan Sparks.

Alan commenced as CEO of East Coast in 1998 after a 21-year career in the Australian Army. He has been an industry leader both in Queensland and nationally for two decades and has been tenacious in promoting the sector to all levels of government and the community.

Alan has been actively involved in a series of innovative training and employment programs including the Defence Trade Program, the Specialist Welding Super Yachts program, the Star Program for disabled youth, the Ozzie Adopt Refugee program and the Females in Trade program.

GROUP TRAINING VETERAN GEOFF FADER RETIRES AFTER 40 YEARS



One of group training's founding figures and NAEN board member Geoff Fader announced his resignation in December 2020.

Geoff has been a pivotal figure in group training from its inception over the last 40 years and has made an enormous contribution in his home state of Tasmania, as well as nationally.

An NAEN Life Member, Geoff had informed colleagues of his intention to retire from his position as Executive Officer of AEN Tasmania at the end of the year.

Everyone who has worked with Geoff will know of his passion, commitment and expertise, which will be sadly missed.



STATE AND TERRITORY REPORTS



NEW SOUTH WALES & ACT

BY JASON SULTANA, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Apprentice Employment Network NSW & ACT membership consists of 28 not-for-profit GTO servicing all parts of NSW and the ACT.

The past 12 months will go down as one of the most volatile periods for GTOs in NSW and ACT. We have been directly impacted by the drought, January bushfires, February floods and the onset of COVID-19 in March.

We see the year ahead a critical period for NSW & ACT GTOs with optimism that commencement numbers will turn around. The strength of the NSW & ACT network to work collaboratively together will provide the best opportunity to maximise the various initiatives available from the NSW, ACT and Federal Governments.

In 2019-20 NSW & ACT GTOs had a 20% decline in commencements. We had 3090 people start a new apprenticeship and traineeship with a GTO during this period which included 405 Indigenous commencements. The network continues to have completion rates of over 65%.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank our Executive Team - Chairperson Craig Randazzo, Deputy Paul Naylor and Treasurer Jim Whiteside for their support of the association and membership. I would also like to acknowledge the good work of our NSW representatives on the NAEN Board, Sharon Smith and Tom Emeleus for their commitment to Group Training at a national level.



QUEENSLAND & NORTHERN TERRITORY

BY ED GIVEN

As in all states the year has proven a difficult one for business and of course Group Training Organisations. The Queensland and Northern Territory markets have been difficult and Jobkeeper and SAT were invaluable in supporting our apprentices in this difficult time. From March through to August we saw a decline in apprentice and trainee numbers but it could have been a lot worse. The hard work from GTOs through that period supporting our apprentice's trainees and host employers is benefiting us now with Qld showing strong commencements across all trades in August, September and October. Group Training Organisations throughout this time have been able to use their experience in training to assist out of work apprentices to get back into the trade after losing work due to the COVID-19 downturn

This proves the capability of Group Training with its state wide footprint and deep knowledge of the training system to help support government policy through difficult economic periods. The Apprentice Employment Network congratulates both the Qld State Government and the Northern Territory Government upon their recent re-elections and looks forward to continue working with the State Government and the Territory Government in their goals of training the future workforce.

The Northern Territory has also faced its challenges economically but it appears that the Territory is starting to turn the corner economically and Group Training is leading the way. In both Queensland and the Northern Territory, Group Training Organisations are innovating on an ongoing basis looking after our existing trade markets and also finding new markets where Group Training has previously not had a large footprint. Personal care and Aged care are two areas where we are seeing growing numbers.

This difficult year has really shown again the strength and ability of Group Training to be a major and important partner to Government and business in training our workforce. We look forward to strengthening our cooperation with both the Queensland and Northern Territory Governments to train more young workers for the Australian economy.

The AEN would like to thank the NAEN for its ongoing efforts in working with the Federal Government and with its state counterparts and of course our wonderful members for the ongoing work they do in employing young people and promoting apprenticeships and traineeships across the state.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BY IRENE WALKER, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Apprentice Employment Network WA (AEN WA) commenced 2019/2020 with 14 GTO members. All AEN WA members are not-for-profit registered charities and provide employment and training opportunities across a diverse range of industries in urban, regional and remote areas of Western Australia (WA).

Despite a comparatively small membership, AEN WA commenced the financial year strongly. Apprentice and trainee (in training) figures, to December 2019, showed that our GTO members employed approximately 61% of all apprentices and trainees in WA.

In October 2019, AEN WA held a successful Training Awards event attended by 150 guests. Our keynote speakers, the Hon Sue Ellery MLC, Minister for Education and Training; and the Hon Steve Irons MP, Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships, helped celebrate the achievements of our apprentices, trainees and local host businesses, and reminded us to work together to build a resilient future workforce and stronger WA economy.

In early 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded worldwide with profound health, social and economic impacts. Throughout this crisis, the WA economy and training sector showed remarkable agility and resilience to meet jobseekers needs.

With COVID-19 restrictions easing in WA at the end of May 2020, and a State Government cash injection to support major civil construction and infrastructure projects, most AEN WA GTO members began recovery and a gradual return to normal business. The exceptions, however, were in Hospitality and Tourism, Retail and the Arts.

Despite the tumultuous second half of the financial year, AEN WA continued its important focus on advocacy. Relationships were developed and strengthened with key decision makers. Collaboration with State and Federal Ministers, plus government departments influenced positive change for GTOs in WA. Our work included:

- Assisted with the design, development and testing of the State Government's new Jobs and Skills WA Employer Incentive Scheme electronic system
- Supported incentives to offset Australian Adult Apprentice wages
- Consulted on the Industrial Manslaughter provisions of the Work Health and Safety Bill 2019
- Provided input on the expansion and policing of the Government's Building Training Policy
- Highlighted the urgent requirement for a preferred credit status for GTOs
- Liaised on lower TAFE fees initiative to achieve consistency across TAFE colleges and better cooperation with employers
- Consulted on the development of the updated State Government school-based apprenticeship and traineeship guide to clarify policy and improve useability for GTOs
- Called for a publicly available 'Out of Contract' register to help apprentices and trainees displaced due to COVID-19.

I acknowledge AEN WA's Committee of Management for their dedication, management expertise and support that resulted in many wins for members – including gaining charity status for AEN WA. Special thanks to Stuart Diepeveen, Chair and NAEN board director representative for WA, and Iain McDougall, Vice Chair and NAEN board director. Their consistent strong advocacy for WA members has contributed to our many 2019/2020 achievements, including improved standing with the WA state government and key stakeholders.



VICTORIA

BY GARY WORKMAN. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The last four months of the financial year certainly has been a challenging one with governments reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic in March, which has seen a significant number of apprentices and trainees being handed back to the network.

I would like to congratulate the network during this testing period, as each GTO has had to manage a wide range of issues and new government initiatives to keep their businesses in a strong position.

It is pleasing to see both state and federal governments consulting with the network to understand what is happening on the ground and what may be the best way forward. Group training provides a safety net for apprentices and trainees and flexibility for host employers. The association has been proactive during this period to position our members as a solution for improving unemployment in the year ahead.

The Victorian Government has provided strong support for our members to engage with several programs to improve apprenticeship participation that will lead to meaningful long-term employment.

Announcements over the past 12 months include:

- Victorian Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees program delivered by AEN
- The Macklin Victorian VET review Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy
- A review into the Victorian major projects and apprenticeship participation

The Steven Joyce Commonwealth VET review undertaken in late 2019 also highlighted several specific areas for improvement in the sector with recent new initiatives including:

- The establishment of the National Skills Commission
- The new National Careers Institute
- A new government department structure Department of Education, Skills and Employment

As you will see from the financial report, 2019-20 has seen a strong result with significant government project funding for the next 12 months. The AEN will continue to work on a range of projects including:

- · Victorian GTO Standards with the VRQA,
- · Victorian Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees program
- Jobs Victoria Employment Network government program
- · Ongoing promotion social media, website and marketing programs

The Victorian Network has also seen a changing of the guard to some respect with several new CEOs over the past 12 months with changes at AGA, BGT, CVGT, G-Force, Kestrel, MEGT and MIGAS. AEN welcome and look forward to continuing to work with each member during these uncertain times.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our members, the AEN Board and staff for their support during the year, and I look forward to working with you as we implement new initiatives and projects that support the network and promote the benefits of the apprenticeship employment network as we work on restoring apprenticeship participation post COVID-19.





TASMANIA

The Apprentice Employment Network Tasmania has five GTO association members who are collectively the largest employs of apprentices in Tasmania. Members meet regularly and work harmoniously together to progress the AEN (Tas) Strategic Plan - vision and goals. All members are invited to regularly meet with Skills Tasmania the Tasmanian State Training Authority as we provide valuable insights into the employment of apprentices and trainees and the industries we work in partnership with.

During the past year long term Executive Officer Geoff Fader resigned from his position with AEN (Tas). Geoff had served the Group Training Sector passionately for 40 years and was a member of the first Board of Group Training Australia and founding Chair of The Tasmanian Hospitality Group Apprenticeship Scheme. Aimee Langford who has worked in the Group Training Sector for 18 years assumed the role of Association Secretariat in February 2020 and is managing the AEN Tas administration with a high level of capability. Members have taken on the advocacy role once played by the Executive Officer.

Tasmania, at this stage, has come through the Covid 19 pandemic well in most sectors and economic recovery and supporting businesses is now the key focus of the Tasmanian State Government. Businesses in Tasmania are aware of the Australian Government funding for training and employment programs and they are responding by employing increased numbers of apprentices and trainees. AEN (Tas) members are responding to this unique opportunity to increase our market share and add great value to our states recovery.

AEN Tas members look forward to the coming months and the opportunities available through working closely with the National Apprentice Employment Network.





SOUTH AUSTRALIA

BY TROY AITKEN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Well, what an unprecedented year 2020 has been! Who would have thought that 12 months ago we would be staring down the barrel of a global pandemic for the better part of this year?

Who would have also thought that words such as Coronavirus; COVID-19; JobSeeker; JobKeeper; JobMaker; and JobTrainer would be part of our everyday language in 2020?

When the Pandemic reared its ugly head in Australia back in March, the situation appeared dire for apprentices, trainees and the Group Training Sector as a whole. In South Australia we had approximately 600 apprentices displaced in a matter of days.

To the Commonwealth Government's credit, they were on the front foot and very quickly introduced SAT and JobKeeper funding, which offered a genuine lifeline to apprentices, trainees and Group Training Organisations alike. This allowed GTOs to reengage or redeploy the majority of these apprentices over the coming months.

In South Australia the State Government in consultation with AEN (SA) also introduced GTO Boost Funding to stimulate apprenticeship and traineeship commencements. GTO Boost funding provided subsidies to Host Employers of \$200 per week for the first six months of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Funds were also made available to GTOs to support the functions of retention, diversity and growth. To the credit of the South Australian Government, this was a welcome development which has seen GTOs investing this funding into business development, allowing Group Training Organisations to source new Host Employers and to explore other vocations not previously utilising apprenticeships and traineeships. Money has also been invested in extra pastoral care and mentoring for existing apprentices and trainees.

The importance of the GTO Boost Funding became evident back in September, when national data indicated that South Australia's decline in commencements was minimal when compared to all other States and Territories.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in July 2020 Apprentice Employment Network (SA) engaged consultants Acil Allen to facilitate workshops addressing the growing economic crisis, particularly around the impact on South Australian youth unemployment, apprentices and trainees.

Subsequently AEN (SA) created a Future Policy Recommendations document that was submitted to the South Australian Government.

The submission's aim was to support South Australian apprentices & trainees by making achievable, future policy recommendations that could be subsequently adopted by Government.

Three key policy measures formed our submission. The key areas were GTO Support; Traineeships for Young People and Public Sector Projects.

To date our submission has enabled AEN (SA) to secure an extension of GTO Boost Funding until March 2020. Investment from the South Australian Government for this project is now sitting at approximately \$7 million, a great win for our South Australian Member GTOs, apprentices and trainees.

With the Commonwealth Government's much welcomed announcement of Boosting Apprenticeship Commencement (BAC) Funding, there has never been a better time to employ an apprentice or trainee in SA.

AEN (SA) are working closely with Government to implement the other policy recommendations around Government traineeships and greater apprentice participation in public sector projects.

The strength of our Network, at both State and National level, has never been more evident than during the COVID-19 crisis. Working collaboratively, our associations and Member GTOs have contributed tirelessly to address the impact on apprentices and trainees by keeping Government informed and accessing crucial funding for Members.

Whilst we are far from over the COVID-19 crisis, AEN (SA) and our Member GTOs are looking optimistically forward to 2021.

Thank you!



OUR MEMBERS

1300apprentice	www.1300apprentice.com.au
Ai Group Training	www.aigroup.com.au
Apprenticeships Are Us	• •
	www.apprus.com.au
Australian Training Company (ATC)	www.austrg.com.au
Skill360	www.skill360.com.au
Career Employment Group Inc	www.ceg.net.au
Community Solutions	www.communitysolutions.org.au
Downs Group Training	www.dgt.org.au
East Coast Apprenticeships	www.ecapprenticeships.com.au
Electrical Group Training WA	www.egt.net.au
Electro Group (NSW)	www.egt.com.au
Group Training Employment (GTE)	www.gte.org.au
Group Training Northern Territory	www.gtntgroup.com.au
GTES	www.gtes.com.au
Hospitality Group Training (WA)	www.hgtwa.com.au
HVTC	www.hvtc.com.au
Kestrel Recruitment	www.kestrelrecruitment.com.au
Kimberley Group Training	www.kgt.org.au
Master Builders Apprentices (SA)	www.mbasa.com.au/apprentices
Master Builders Apprenticeship Service (NSW)	www.mbansw.asn.au
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