

# ANNUAL REPORT **2020-2021**



National Apprenticeship  
Employment Network

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National Apprenticeship  
Employment Network





## ABOUT NAEN

The National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN) is the peak national body representing a network of group training organisations 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, dealing with governments stakeholders and policy makers.

NAEN plays a key part in the development of national policy affecting the VET sector. It is a member of the federal government's VET Stakeholder Committee which meets regularly and plays a central role in VET reform and policy development.

The Patron of NAEN is The Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd).

# NAEN BOARD

NAME	BOARD POSITION	ORGANISATION
<b>David Nagy</b>	Chair, SA Representative	Maxima Group
<b>Sharon Smith</b>	Deputy Chair, NSW/ACT Representative	HVTC
<b>Iain McDougall</b>	Member Representative	Hospitality Group Training WA Inc
<b>Stuart Diepeveen</b>	WA Representative	Electrical Group Training
<b>Tom Emeleus</b>	Member Representative	NECA Electrical Apprenticeships (NSW/QLD/ACT)
<b>Megan Lilly</b>	Member Representative	Australian Industry Group
<b>Tom Mangan</b>	QLD/NT Representative (until Apr 2021)	Community Solutions Group
<b>Bridie Gildea</b>	Member Representative	MEGT
<b>Kathryn Stenson</b>	Member Representative	GTNT Group
<b>Paul Hillberg</b>	QLD/NT Representative (from May 2021)	Apprenticeships Queensland
<b>David Fagan</b>	TAS Representative (until Oct 2020)	Tasmanian Building Group Apprentice Scheme
<b>Leanne Wallace</b>	TAS Representative (from Nov 2020)	Work and Training

## SUB-COMMITTEES

### AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE

**Stuart Diepeveen (Chair)**

**Iain McDougall**

**Sharon Smith**

**David Nagy**

### GOVERNANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

**Stuart Diepeveen (Chair)**

**Sharon Smith**

**Tom Emeleus**

**David Nagy**

## BOARD BIOGRAPHIES

### DAVID NAGY, CHAIR



David is Executive Manager - Recruitment Services at Maxima, and was appointed NAEN Chair in April 2019. He has been on the Board of NAEN since 2014 and has also been Chair of AEN SA since 2015. Originally employed at Maxima in 2003 as Marketing Coordinator, David has spent more than 18 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 MCDUGALL



Iain 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.

## LEANNE WALLACE



Leanne is the CEO of Work & Training which is the largest employer of trainees and apprentices and the largest private provider of training in Tasmania. Leanne began supporting business owners as Manager of the Circular Head Business Enterprise Centre in 1992. During her time there she discovered a passion for assisting businesses and promoting lifelong learning. Over the past 19 years Leanne has increased her expertise in all facets of the Vocational Education and Training Sector and has held six positions at Work & Training which have culminated in her being offered the position of CEO. Leanne is Chair of Apprentice Employment Network Tasmania, Director of National Apprentice Employment Network, Committee Member of the Local Jobs Program Taskforce North and Northwest Tasmania and Tourism & Hospitality Workforce Advisory Committee.

## STUART DIEPEVEEN



Stuart is General Manager of 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 early-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 2,500 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 fifteen 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 Executive Director – Centre for Education & Training at 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, and the Australia Pacific Training Coalition. 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.

## PAUL HILLBERG



Joining Apprenticeships Qld in June 2016, Paul Hillberg brings over two decades of experience leading and working with Apprentices and Trainees in both blue and white collar environments. Paul has a vast range of management experience working within the public and private sector in both small and large businesses. While Paul was the General Manager of an Enterprise Registered Training Organisation (ERTO), he represented QLD on the water industry's National Industry Advisory Council responsible for training package development and maintenance across Australia.

## 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 TOR GAS 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 GTO focused 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 Acting CEO and then CEO in January 2020.

## KATHRYN STENSON



Kathryn is the 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 charitable project. Kathryn joined GTNT Group as CEO in 2012, 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, the Australian Skills Institute and the Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory.

## 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

<b>DIANNE DAYHEW</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>KRISTEN SYDNEY</b>	Executive Support and Project Officer
<b>STACEY CHRISTENSEN</b>	Executive and Board Support (July-Dec 2020)
<b>ANGIE TURAY</b>	Projects Manager

## CONTRACTED SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

<b>BOB BOWDEN</b>	Communications Advisor
<b>KEN LANCERO</b>	Company Accountant



## 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 value-added information and relevant and timely business opportunities



## CHAIR'S REPORT

I have great pleasure in presenting the Annual Report of the National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN) – one that covers a period of significant disruption to the apprenticeship sector.

The impacts of the COVID pandemic saw much turbulence for Group Training Organisations (GTOs), just as it did for so many across the community.

The picture varied across the States and Territories. For some GTOs there was minimal disruption, but for others it was a rolling series of crises, as restrictions were imposed, lifted and often re-imposed.

The challenge of keeping apprentice and trainee jobs safe and working with host employers took on a new level of urgency.

It is a great credit to the group training network that it was able to manage this period while preserving as many jobs as possible.

The central mission of group training is always to help build the skills of coming generations, so it was especially difficult for so many of us to see this valuable work threatened as COVID wrought havoc on much of the economy.

We can be thankful for the women and men across the group training network who worked tirelessly to keep jobs safe, and juggled the demands of work and training.

I would like to extend my thanks and admiration to everyone who made this possible.

We must acknowledge the support of Federal, State and Territory governments who responded quickly and with generosity to the unfolding impacts of the pandemic.

At the Commonwealth level, the apprentice support programs were a lifeline that saved the jobs of thousands of mainly young people, just setting out in their careers.

I want to extend my appreciation to the State and Territory Apprentice Employment Networks who shouldered much of the burden from the disruption and collectively worked with NAEN to arrive at solutions.



NAEN CEO Dianne Dayhew played a pivotal role in this period, and on behalf of the Board, I extend my thanks to Dianne and her team for the outstanding response to a once-in-a-generation event. At the same time, Dianne pursued a range of initiatives that have extended NAEN's reach and capability, and put us in a stronger position to pursue the interests of members.

It is no coincidence that the strong round of engagement and information projects saw a strong increase in membership. I am certain that the value of NAEN membership has never been more evident.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board Directors for their invaluable contribution. They give their time and energy because they are passionate about our apprenticeship system. We are extraordinarily well-served by this group of people.

As we approach the AGM, there is an emerging sense of optimism that the worst is behind us.

I trust that over the coming year we will be able to resume activities and engagements that have been denied, and that the apprenticeship sector, and group training, will continue to be a force for positive change.

**David Nagy**

Chair



## CEO'S REPORT

Over the past year the group training network has experienced some of the toughest conditions in memory. It has also demonstrated its enduring strength.

It has been a particularly challenging year for many GTOs. The initial hopes that COVID would be quickly combatted proved illusory. Rather it has been a period of stop-start conditions as apprentices and trainees have been juggled with host employers, as everyone has strived to save jobs.

I have heard so many distressing stories as GTOs have worked tirelessly to keep young people connected to work. The determination and the compassion that GTOs have demonstrated has made us all proud.

At the national level, we made sure that the reality of the situation was promptly and accurately conveyed to the highest levels of government, so that economic responses were properly informed.

The Federal Government's response to the economic fallout from the pandemic has been a saving grace. It has seen one of the biggest expenditures ever targeted to the apprenticeship sector.

We continue to work with the Commonwealth to fine tune measures and pass on the valuable feedback and insights from member GTOs. I thank each and every GTO for the time and the expertise that enabled us to provide the most credible and authoritative advice to Ministers, Departments, MP and advisors, as critical policy decisions were being taken.

I was also pleased that we were able to maintain connections between the GTO network through a series of virtual events where we discussed key topics of interest.

And it has been a special pleasure to see new members for NAEN. The value of a unified national network, speaking with one voice has never been more important.

The State and Territory AEN's have played an enormous role during the pandemic, being the first point of contact for most members, and seeing first-hand the impacts in their jurisdictions. I thank them for their support during this challenging time.

In November the network farewelled Ed Given, who retired as Executive Officer of AEN Queensland & Northern Territory. Ed made a lasting contribution to group training. We welcome Craig Westwood into the role.



We were disappointed to have to postpone the 2021 National Conference in Hobart due to the pandemic, but look forward to being able to host the event in March 2022.

I am also thrilled that the highly regarded Today's Skills; Tomorrow's Leaders professional development program will be returning, thanks to a partnership with the National Careers Institute.

The program will see 22 outstanding group training apprentices and trainees at a week-long residential program at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra.

I have been pleased to continue to represent our network on the Commonwealth VET Stakeholder Committee, where national VET policy is discussed and the views of stakeholders canvassed.

We know that the government has been undertaking extensive consultation over its VET reform blueprint, which will begin to take shape over the next year.

I would like to extend my thanks to the then Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, and her advisors, who oversaw the extensive rollout of assistance measures during this period. We were delighted to welcome in March 2021, the Hon Stuart Robert as Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business.

I would also like to thank the hard-working officials in the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Skills and Education who have gone to enormous lengths to ensure that apprentices and trainees were being looked after.

We are honoured to have as our Patron, the Governor-General His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AS DSC (Ret'd). In late 2020, the Governor General wished to thank and acknowledge our organisation's work, so it was a privilege to nominate NAEN Chair, David Nagy, to receive the Governor General's Medal.

I would like to thank all the Board Directors for the valuable role they play and the special insights they bring that helps us to best represent members' interests.

I would also like to acknowledge the staff and the wider team that helps bring our work to fruition. It would not be possible without them.

We look forward to continuing to represent the group training network at the national level and help ensure that this pillar of the vocational training system remains vibrant and strong.

### **Dianne Dayhew**

Chief Executive Officer



# INDIGENOUS DESIGNS LIFTS THE SPIRITS



Left to right: Kirryn Scicluna, Employment & Career Partner, My Gateway; Rhonda Sampson, Artist, RS Creative Solutions; James Hunt, 1st Year Engineering Apprentice; and Shelley Bullock, CEO, My Gateway.

NAEN was delighted to receive some wonderful Indigenous artwork from designer, Rhonda Sampson, which will be available for use across the group training network.

Rhonda is a proud Kamilaroi woman who was announced as the Regional Winner of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Award for Southern and South Western Sydney at the prestigious NSW Training Awards.

Commissioned by NAEN, her artwork, “Growing Futures” has been a stunning success and has had a profound impact on NAEN staff and others who have seen it.

“The footpath represents the journey of job seekers, apprentices and trainees,” Rhonda explains.

“Along that journey, everything intertwines from the individuals themselves, the job seekers, their host businesses and their communities.”

The artwork currently hangs proudly in My Gateway’s Sydney office. It is planned to share the designs among participating GTOs.

NAEN also hopes to work with Rhonda in the future to help reflect the valuable work that group training is doing in Indigenous communities.



## ARTWORK STORYLINE

This artwork “Growing Futures” depicts the partnership between the National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN) and member Group Training Organisations (GTOs), with their shared commitment to employing and supporting apprentices and trainees.

At the heart of the artwork, the central circle symbolises NAEN as the peak body representing the national network of GTOs, and Australia’s largest employer network of apprentices and trainees.

Branching off NAEN are eight circles representing Australia’s states and territories where GTOs operate.

The GTOs that directly employ apprentices and trainees and place them with host businesses are represented by the symbol with outer white lines which reflects the many employment opportunities they provide to job seekers.

The footprints represent the Indigenous apprentices and trainees coming from their communities to embark on their employment journey – along the dotted pathway. The four dotted lines represent each year of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Together NAEN, the GTOs and the host businesses are playing a vital role in “*Growing Futures*”.



# ADVOCACY

NAEN played an active part in advocacy to the Federal Government for measures to support apprentices and trainees through the COVID pandemic.

The government's introduction of the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees measure provided a lifeline to help retain many apprentices and trainees, and the Boosting Apprenticeships Commencement (BAC) wage subsidy has helped to rebuild the skills pipeline in the wake of the devastation wrought by the pandemic.

The government is to be applauded for heeding the advice from the sector and acting swiftly to introduce measures that would safeguard against a potentially catastrophic outcome.

NAEN was also pleased to be able to play a valuable part through the management of the National Re-engagement Register to support ongoing employment opportunities of apprentices and trainees.

Following major changes proposed for funding of Indigenous programs, NAEN provided a submission to the Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) Discussion Paper.

## WEBINAR SERIES

NAEN hosted a series of webinars for GTOs on topics of central interest to group training and the apprenticeship sector.

At a time when face-to-face engagement was out of the question, the virtual sessions were an important connection for GTOs and a chance to stay updated on critical issues.

### **Economic Update – what it means for Apprenticeships, Jobs and the Future: July 2020**

Following the government's economic and fiscal update, NAEN hosted a ninety-minute economic and industry briefing to discuss the implications for the economy and the apprenticeship sector. Julie Toth, Chief Economist with Australian Industry Group and Linda White from the Department of Education, Skills and Employment were the guest speakers.

NAEN subsequently branded the webinar series under the banner "Ideas, Information and Inspiration".

The first in the series was held in November 2020 on the issue of mental health and resilience for apprentices.



### **NAEN JobKeeper 2.0 virtual event: July 2020**

In July 2020 a second webinar was provided to the national GTO network in response to the high rate of enquiries regarding changes to JobKeeper. This was another well-attended session delivered by ESV Accounting and Business Advice.

### **Mental Health and Resilience for Apprentices: November 2020**

This event featured Dr Mark Deady from the Black Dog Institute presenting research and resources to support employers and apprentices, including Headgear and the Mental Health Toolkit. It was sponsored by AATIS (Apprenticeship and Traineeship Information Service).

### **Emerging Tech for GTOs: March 2021**

Sponsored by ReadyTech, this event featured Col Levander, CEO, Ratescalc and a discussion hosted by Tom Emeleus, General Manager, NECA Training and Apprenticeships, on avenues for technology adaptation and transformation.

### **How to attract teenagers to apprenticeships through your marketing efforts: June 2021**

MEGT ANP sponsored our virtual event featuring Lee Morgan, Managing Partner, Cure Collective, who shared practical tools, tips and techniques with the GTO network..

NAEN plans to continue hosting events, free to our members, to inform discussion against current topics of interest within our network.

## **MEMBER ALERTS AND NEWSLETTERS**

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

These updates covered 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 interest across the group training network and the VET sector, more widely.

## MEDIA RELATIONS



NAEN regularly responds to media requests and issues media releases on topics of relevance to the group training sector.

NAEN CEO Dianne Dayhew appeared on TV news and in radio broadcasts, discussing the impact of COVID on apprenticeships and responding to the government assistance measures.

As a result of a paid promotional opportunity (shared between NAEN and NECA), group training was featured in the Daily Telegraph in July, "Group Training Organisations are here to help".

NAEN featured in the September 2020 edition of "Associations", the magazine of the Associations Forum in an article outlining the actions taken by NAEN to assist members during the pandemic.

As part of National Skills Week, NAEN featured in a full-page News Ltd feature, "Jobs ahoj for young people".

NAEN engages regularly on social media, where it reaches a wide audience. NAEN posts to Facebook reached more than 26,000, while followers on LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram totalled approximately 4,600.

As part of NAEN's extended stakeholder outreach, CEO Dianne Dayhew participated in webinars for Year13, the Australian Parents' Council, International Women's Day, and the Careers Industry

# OUR PROGRAMS

## NSW ITAB PROGRAM

In April 2020, NAEN was awarded a contract to operate the NSW Building, Construction, Resources and Infrastructure Training Advisory Body (BCRITAB) on behalf of the NSW Government.

The BCRITAB provides advice on the training and skills needs of its industry sectors. It is one of ten Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs) operating in NSW.

This 15-month contract runs until June 2022.

## NAEN INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS

NAEN has continued its important work with the National Australians Indigenous Agency (NIAA) to support Indigenous school-based trainees, apprentices, and jobseekers through the national group training network.

Despite initial uncertainty due to the pandemic, NAEN's contracts under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) continues to deliver great outcomes. As part of IAS, NAEN's Jobs, Land and Economy (JLEP) Indigenous Tailored Assistance Project has provided employment and training for Indigenous candidates through apprenticeships, School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) at Certificate levels II, III, and IV, as well as through direct employment placements. This has provided employment opportunities across the country in a range of industries such as construction and allied health.

Collectively with the support of 34 GTOs, NAEN has commenced over 200 Indigenous candidates out of 450 targeted placements allocated under this contract. The network is on track to fulfilling the remaining allocations before the end of the recruitment period of December 2021.

Direct employment placements have also been provided through JLEP through brokerage of NIAA funds to 37 GTOs. A high percentage of targeted placements have been filled and all placements are on track for completion prior to the end of the contracted recruitment period.

NAEN also brokered funds through NIAA's Community Services Program (CSP) to 14 GTOs across Australia, providing accredited training targeted to Indigenous participants in Certificate III, IV or Diploma level in Early Childhood, Aged Care or Disability Services. NAEN continues to work actively with GTOs to further their engagement in the community services and health sectors through Indigenous training and employment.



The roll out of the BAC wage subsidy initially unintentionally disrupted GTOs' access to NIAA funds brokered by NAEN. Under the rules for IAS, a job participant was not eligible for funding if they were receiving a wage subsidy provided elsewhere through a Commonwealth, state, or territory program, unless they are specifically authorised by the Commonwealth.

Because of the relative size of the BAC wage subsidy payment, there was a strong likelihood that apprentice employers were likely to be incentivised to engage apprentices under that program, instead of under the JLEP or CSP.

This meant that the targeted advantage that JLEP and CSP provided to Indigenous employment and training had effectively been negated under BAC. NAEN was concerned that NAEN's IAS plans would stall. NAEN was also concerned that Indigenous participants who entered employment or training via the BAC program would not benefit from the wrap-around services provided through GTOs under JLEP and CSP, including critical mentoring, individual support, and pastoral care.

The unintended consequence of the BAC was that future Indigenous apprentice and trainee opportunities may be at risk. A solution advocated by NAEN was to allow those eligible for the BAC wage subsidy to also be eligible for JLEP or CSP.

Following our advocacy work, including meetings with the NIAA in Canberra, NAEN was pleased to receive written advice in January 2021 that providers could claim outcome payments for Indigenous participants who are accessing permissible Commonwealth wage subsidies whilst in employment (except where the provider was the direct employer of the participant; or the Employer was accessing the 1000 Jobs package for that participant). Permissible wage subsidies identified were JobKeeper, JobMaker Hiring Credits, Supporting Apprenticeships/Boosting Apprenticeships Restart; Youth and Youth Bonus; Parents; Long Term Unemployed; Australian Apprenticeship Incentives Program, Disability Employment Services Wage Subsidy Scheme and Wage Start. Participants attracting these subsidies would be eligible VTEC and TAEG participants, provided all other eligibility requirements in the Agreement were met.

In May 2021, the federal government announced in the 2021-22 Budget that the Indigenous Skills and Employment program (ISEP) would replace the Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTEC), Tailored Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG) and Employment Parity Initiative (EPI) from 1 July 2022.

To continue support and advocate for increased training and employment for Indigenous Australians, NAEN submitted a transitional TAEG application in June 2021 to maintain activity and outcomes through GTOs for Indigenous employment until ISEP grants are opened.

NAEN looks forward to working in consultation with the NIAA and the GTO network on the proposed new Indigenous skills, engagement and employment Program over the coming months.



## **APPRENTICE AND TRAINEE RE-ENGAGEMENT REGISTER**

NAEN continued to operate the Apprentice and Trainee Re-engagement Register, which had been established in April 2020, and supported by the federal government as part of the national COVID-19 response.

Throughout the later-half of 2020 and into 2021, NAEN continued to provide support to eligible displaced apprentices and trainees. With eligibility determined by the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees (SAT) measure criteria, registrants were offered support through connections to prospective new employers and were provided with further information, including links to local jurisdictional supports, such as State and Territory GTO networks, Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers, other jobs boards and relevant Training Authorities.

NAEN welcomed the extension of the Re-Engagement Register in September 2020 until 31 March 2021.

# STATE AND TERRITORY REPORTS



## NEW SOUTH WALES & AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**BY JASON SULTANA, EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

The Apprentice Employment Network NSW & ACT membership continues to grow with 30 not-for-profit GTOs as members servicing all parts of NSW and the ACT.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact, with Greater Sydney and the ACT placed in an extended lockdown. This was unfortunate as the industry is seeing significant increases in commencements on the back of the Commonwealth Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements program. A highlight has been the resilience of the network to work together through the challenges to ensure apprentices, trainees and host employers are given the best opportunities to complete qualifications.

Our biggest challenge moving forward will be the ability to fill vacant roles in a tight labour market.

The industry continues to receive support from the NSW Government with funding in:

- GTO Pre Apprenticeship Programs
- GTO Innovation Fund
- GTO Completion Incentive
- Education Pathways Pilot Program

We have over 6,800 apprentices and trainees actively employed with our member GTOs including Indigenous placements making up 10% of total numbers. We continue to have higher completion rates in the industry 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 the ongoing work for 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 the national level.



## QUEENSLAND & NORTHERN TERRITORY

**BY CRAIG WESTWOOD, EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Any Queensland and Northern Territory summary must commence with acknowledging the work and steady hand of our former Executive Officer Ed Given. Ed retired in December 2020 after a long career in VET, and has deservedly spent a good amount of 2021 bodysurfing on the Gold Coast.

Similar to our interstate counterparts; most Queensland and Northern Territory GTOs are experiencing candidate shortages making it difficult to capitalise on the demand for labour and skills. Buoyant economic conditions; without the COVID lockdown disruptions experienced in the South are being fuelled further by government employment and industry growth agendas that span the next decade.

The work of AEN Queensland and Northern Territory (AENQNT) has this year focussed on providing information and operational support to our member GTOs as they innovate to meet the opportunities in the booming construction, infrastructure, utilities, and defence sectors and resurgent resources, primary industries, and resources sectors.

For members we have reinvigorated our calendar of professional development with monthly online "Lunch & Learn" events providing topical information across the domains of Strategy & Engagement, GTO Operations, and Work Health & Safety. Whilst we will retain the online format supporting our wide regional network, we hope to reintroduce some face-to-face events in 2022.

We are proud to have lifted membership to 28 GTOs and continue to assist three potential new GTOs with establishment and registration.

Providing pathway opportunities, the Queensland Group Training Pre-Apprenticeship Program has enabled GTOs to access a designated fund that assists them to partner directly with industry to develop and offer paid pre-apprenticeship pathway programs across the construction, engineering, hospitality, and now automotive sectors. These programs represent a significant investment by government and acknowledge the capability of GTOs to rapidly develop meaningful industry programs. More so, the capacity of GTOs has further been displayed with many forming program management consortium groups and partnerships across the network.

Supporting at-risk and cancelled apprentices to reconnect with employment and training, we have re-established the Queensland Apprenticeship Out of Trade Register under the Trade Apprentices name. In July we welcomed Steve Coolahan to the AENQNT team as the Program Coordinator for Trade Apprentices. Steve's role and the Trade Apprentices is apprentice centric and is focussed on providing support to apprentices requiring information, financial, training, and personal support assistance to reconnect with their apprenticeship. In 2022 we hope to see Trade Apprentices broaden its reach to support injured, interstate, and long-term cancelled apprentices.

In close, the team at the AENQNT acknowledge the hard work of all of our member GTOs in 2021. We thank them for their hard work and direction-setting feedback on AENQNT's focus and activities.

Best wishes for 2022 – Craig, Lauren, Steve, and Emily.





## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**BY IRENE WALKER, EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

We commenced the 2020-21 financial year with an additional six GTOs joining the network, taking our total number of members to 17.

In November 2020, as Western Australia continued to maintain a COVID-19 free status, AEN WA was privileged to once again hold a successful in-person, Awards of Excellence event. This event, attended by some 150 people, celebrated the achievements of our apprentices and trainees and acknowledges the contributions of the host employers that support our members. We are proud of all our inspiring finalists and winners and thank the generous support of our sponsors.

In early February, Perth, Peel and South West Regions of WA went into lockdown for a week, with restrictions on social gatherings and masks mandatory for the second week. The situation was exasperated by bushfires in the Perth, Midwest and South West Regions of WA, destroying homes and saw most of northern Perth covered in a choking blanket of smoke. Despite this apprentice and trainee numbers remained stable.

With WA holding its state elections in March 2021, AEN WA embarked on a rigorous State Election Engagement Strategy (SEES). The strategy included the development of:

- AEN WA policy paper "Restoring and Reinvigorating the Apprenticeship Sector" designed to lay the economic and social case for the policy recommendations that AEN WA took to the election
- Campaign flyer: Group Training – Creating the workforce of the future
- Letter to all MPs/candidates from AEN WA Chair urging support for group training
- 'Shell' AEN WA media release for GTOs to tailor and use in their own electorates

Our SEES has been a great success and has led to some key strategic policy and program wins for the GTO network. They include:

- \$95 million to enhance the delivery of VET career pathways in high schools;
- \$91.5 million to extend a freeze on all TAFE fees to at least 2025;
- \$29.8 million to create an extra 4,000 VET places at TAFE by 2024;
- \$25 million to supply TAFE campuses with modern equipment;
- \$32.4 million to train an additional 300 apprentices and trainees for small and medium sized businesses, employed through GTOs;
- \$5.2 million to fund the 'gap' in wage costs between mature age and junior apprentices for 200 additional apprentices;
- A \$3.4 million pilot program, run by the Building and Construction Industry Training Board, to create openings for 150 mature-age apprentices and trainees, with 100 places allocated to GTOs and 50 to direct employment, with a minimum 15 per cent for female and Indigenous apprentices.

These initiatives will help address many issues, including the barriers to employment of mature age apprentices and trainees, something that causes real hardship for many who have experienced career disruption or chosen to pursue a different career path via an apprenticeship.

The experience of the COVID-19 economic downturn has been a challenge but also a source of strength and resilience for the group training sector. GTOs rallied to support apprentices and trainees that were laid off and are now seeing many of those return to stable employment as the recovery gathers strength.

Over the 2020-21 period, Western Australian employers have responded by taking on more apprentices and trainees than ever before, with more than 650 commencements in the year to June 30, 2021.

All of the achievements in this financial period sets the scene for a super busy 2021-22 and AEN WA promises to continue to rise to the challenge to benefit our WA members.

As always, we thank our dedicated committee of management who tirelessly and continuously support and advocate for all our WA members on issues of major significance. You are the powerhouse behind the network, always operating selflessly for the good of the WA GTO network.



## VICTORIA

**BY GARY WORKMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The past 12 months has certainly been a challenging one with governments and host employers reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic. This initially saw a significant number of apprentices and trainees being handed back to the network, thankfully since October 2020 the network has been able to rebuild with strong new apprentice/trainee commencements.

It is pleasing to see both state and federal governments prioritising youth employment especially through apprenticeship programs. The Commonwealths Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements program and the State governments Victorian Apprenticeship Recovery and the Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees programs have allowed our network to rebuild their support and increase commencements at the start of 2021.

The AEN has worked hard with the Victorian Government to provide strong support for our members to engage with several new programs to improve apprenticeship participation that will lead to meaningful long-term employment.

Overall, 2020-21 has been a strong year for the association with significant government project funding that will continue into 2021-22. The AEN will continue to work on a range of projects including:

- Victorian Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees program the Apprenticeships Victoria.
- Victorian Apprenticeship Recovery Program through Jobs Victoria.
- The establishment of a specific GTO Big Build Apprenticeships program for major projects through Apprenticeships Victoria including GTO apprentice ambassadors.
- A new MOU with the VRQA to support the Victorian GTO Standards and members.
- A new long-term Victorian Government GTO funding agreement that will commence in October 2021.
- The Macklin Victorian VET review – Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy that has now established -Apprenticeships Victoria within the Department of Education
- and the Victorian Skills Authority which will commence in 2021/22

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our members, the AEN Board and staff for their support during the challenging year, and we 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 post COVID-19.



## TASMANIA

Employment and training, especially through the VET Sector was recognised in the past year as an important component of Australia's recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Australia and the world changed in 2020/21 and migration was not possible the Government recognised that Australia did not have the skilled workers it required and funding for training and employment programs was significantly increased. GTOs were well placed to deliver programs and services urgently needed by both businesses and individuals. Our Tasmanian GTOs seized this unique opportunity to progress our purpose and grow our services.

The Australian Government released the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements (BAC) wage subsidy to support employers, including GTOs in March 2021 which continues until March 2022. The program has not only assisted businesses but also benefited GTOs in Tasmania as the number of apprentices and trainees we employ increased.

In addition to the BAC funding, Tasmanian small to medium businesses were able to apply for two Tasmanian Department of State Growth funded programs which have been passed on in full to host businesses by GTOs. The funding programs are the Apprentice and Trainee Grant for Small Business and Mentoring for Success. Businesses have been well supported in the past year by Tasmanian GTOs as in addition to our usual services as we have completed the administration required for the three government funded programs which has been considerable.



As part of the 'Mentoring for Success' grant program, a marketing campaign was funded and coordinated by the Department of State Growth to raise the profile and promote the value of GTOs to Small and Medium Enterprises. AEN Tas member GTOs have been consulted on the design and delivery of every aspect of the program which will benefit all GTOs in Tasmania. The campaign includes social media video and tiles, radio and print, promoting the slogan "WITH A GTO YOUR GOOD TO GO". The campaign commences in mid-November 2021 and continues to March 2022.

AEN Tas does not have an Executive Officer, instead the Chair and Deputy Chair have taken on greater responsibility and advocated for the benefit of all Tasmanian GTOs while creating a stronger relationship with the Department of State Growth during the design and rollout of the Mentoring for Success funding and marketing campaign. The Association members look forward to the coming year, which as usual, in our ever-changing sector will hold many challenges and successes for us all.



## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

**BY TROY AITKEN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

The 2020/21 financial period was another successful year for group training and the VET sector in South Australia.

It is however difficult to reflect on this financial year without casting one's mind back to March 2020, when the Coronavirus first impacted our nation. With the onset of the pandemic in Australia, the situation appeared dire for apprentices, trainees, and the group training sector as a whole.

Over the past 12 months, South Australia has been extremely fortunate to not have been heavily impacted by the severity of the virus or subsequent lockdowns. Our thoughts have very much been with our counterparts in NSW and Victoria who have been doing it tough.

In 2020, the State Government in consultation with AEN SA, 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.

Subsequently AEN SA created a "Future Policy Recommendations" document that was submitted to the South Australian government in July 2020. The submission's aim was to support South Australian apprentices and trainees by making achievable, future policy recommendations that could be subsequently adopted by government.

As a result of our submission, AEN SA was able to negotiate an extension of GTO Boost funding until June 30, 2021. Unfortunately, funds allocated to GTO Boost Funding were expended by May 31, 2021. However, the funding extension was highly valued.

Approximately \$11 million was invested by the South Australian government for this project, being a great win for our South Australian member GTOs, apprentices, and trainees.

GTO Boost Funding, combined with the Commonwealth Government's extension of Boosting Apprenticeship Commencement (BAC) Funding, offered genuine opportunities to apprentices, trainees, and GTOs and resulted in significant growth for our sector. There had never been a better time to employ an apprentice or trainee in SA.

Contrary to the anticipated disaster originally facing our GTOs, the Department for Innovation and Skills report that South Australian GTO commencements have increased on average by 20% when compared to pre-COVID numbers. This number could have been higher, however sourcing suitable candidates for vacancies has been a significant issue for our member GTOs.

Currently our Network in South Australia employs over 3,300 apprentices and trainees. Recent NCVER data indicates that South Australia is leading the country with regards to market share of total apprentices and trainees employed within our State, boasting an enviable market share of approximately 25%.

The success of Group Training in South Australia can be attributed to the strong relationships and support received from, the State Government; David Pisoni our Minister for Innovation and Skills; the Department for Innovation and Skills; the AEN national network; and most importantly our Board and Member GTOs, who work tirelessly to promote apprenticeships, traineeships, and the virtues of the group training model.

This great collaborative effort has no doubt been reflected by the excellent growth in group training commencements over the past twelve months.

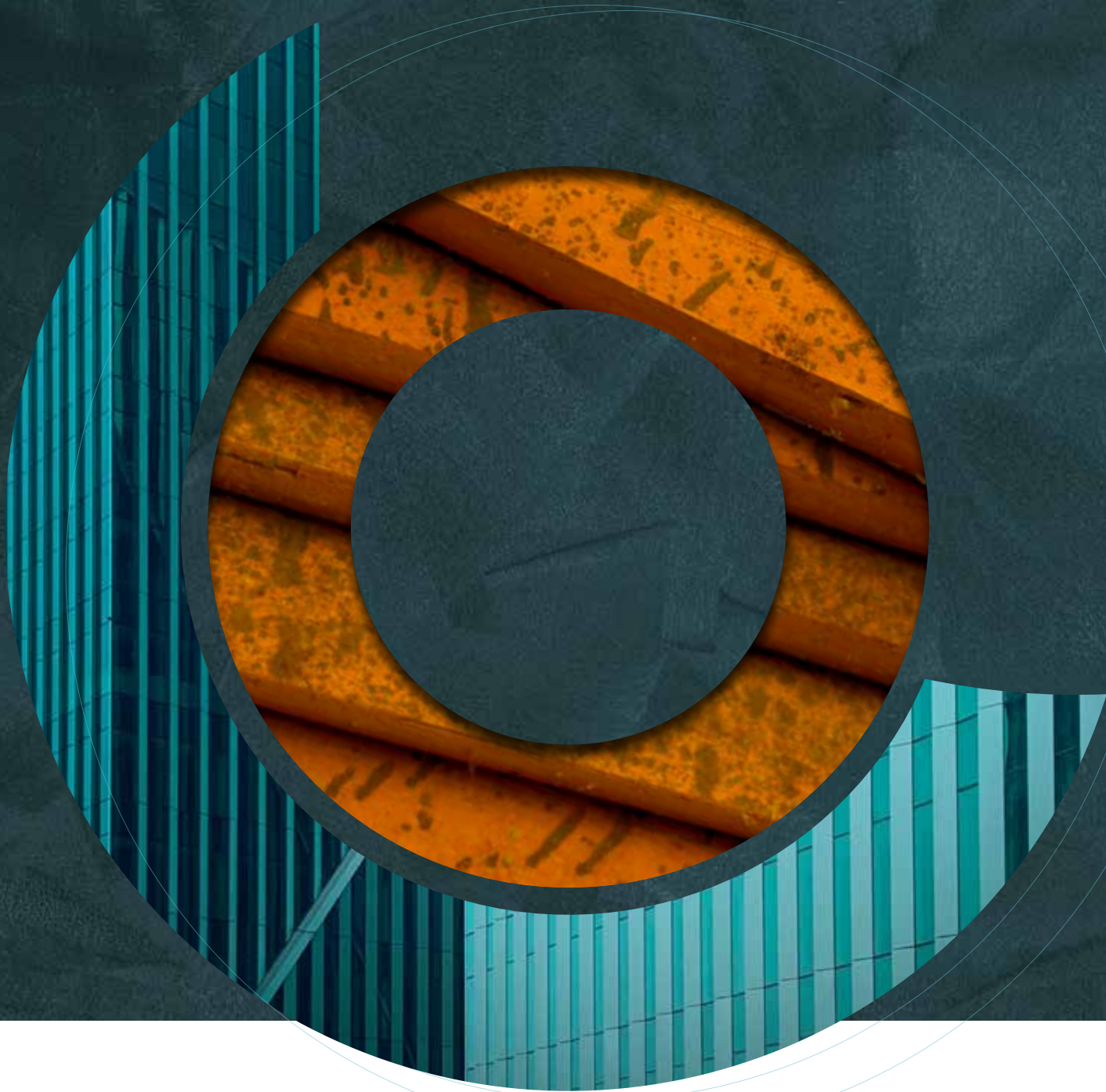
I would like to thank the staff of the association, AEN SA board members and our member GTOs, for their ongoing support in championing the interests of group training in South Australia.

# OUR MEMBERS

1300apprentice	<a href="http://www.1300apprentice.com.au">www.1300apprentice.com.au</a>
Ai Group Training	<a href="http://www.aigroup.com.au">www.aigroup.com.au</a>
Apprenticeships Are Us	<a href="http://www.apprus.com.au">www.apprus.com.au</a>
ATEC Group Training	<a href="http://www.atec.asn.au">www.atec.asn.au</a>
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Downs Group Training	<a href="http://www.dgt.org.au">www.dgt.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>
G-Force Recruitment Ltd	<a href="http://www.gforce.org.au">www.gforce.org.au</a>
Group Training Employment (GTE)	<a href="http://www.gte.org.au">www.gte.org.au</a>
Group Training Northern Territory	<a href="http://www.gtntgroup.com.au">www.gtntgroup.com.au</a>
GTES	<a href="http://www.gtes.com.au">www.gtes.com.au</a>
Hospitality Group Training (WA)	<a href="http://www.hgtwa.com.au">www.hgtwa.com.au</a>
HVTC	<a href="http://www.hvtc.com.au">www.hvtc.com.au</a>
Kestrel Recruitment	<a href="http://www.kestrelrecruitment.com.au">www.kestrelrecruitment.com.au</a>
Kimberley Group Training	<a href="http://www.kgt.org.au">www.kgt.org.au</a>
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Master Builders Apprenticeship Service (NSW)	<a href="http://www.mbanw.asn.au">www.mbanw.asn.au</a>
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TASBGAS	<a href="http://www.tasbgas.com.au">www.tasbgas.com.au</a>
The Apprentice and Traineeship Co - South West	<a href="http://www.gtsw.com.au">www.gtsw.com.au</a>
Apprenticeship Careers Australia	<a href="http://www.apprenticeshipcareers.com.au">www.apprenticeshipcareers.com.au</a>
Australian Training Works	<a href="http://www.atw.org.au">www.atw.org.au</a>
WPC Group Limited	<a href="http://www.wpcgroup.org.au">www.wpcgroup.org.au</a>
Golden West Apprenticeships Ltd	<a href="http://www.goldenwest.org.au">www.goldenwest.org.au</a>
HIA	<a href="http://www.hia.com.au">www.hia.com.au</a>
Sunraysia & Murray Group Training (SMGT)	<a href="http://www.mmtc.com.au">www.mmtc.com.au</a>
Work & Training Ltd	<a href="http://www.workandtraining.com.au">www.workandtraining.com.au</a>
Programmed Skilled Workforce Ltd	<a href="http://www.programmed.com.au">www.programmed.com.au</a>
Apprenticeships Queensland	<a href="http://www.appqld.com.au">www.appqld.com.au</a>
Victorian Group Training	<a href="http://www.vgtc.org.au">www.vgtc.org.au</a>



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