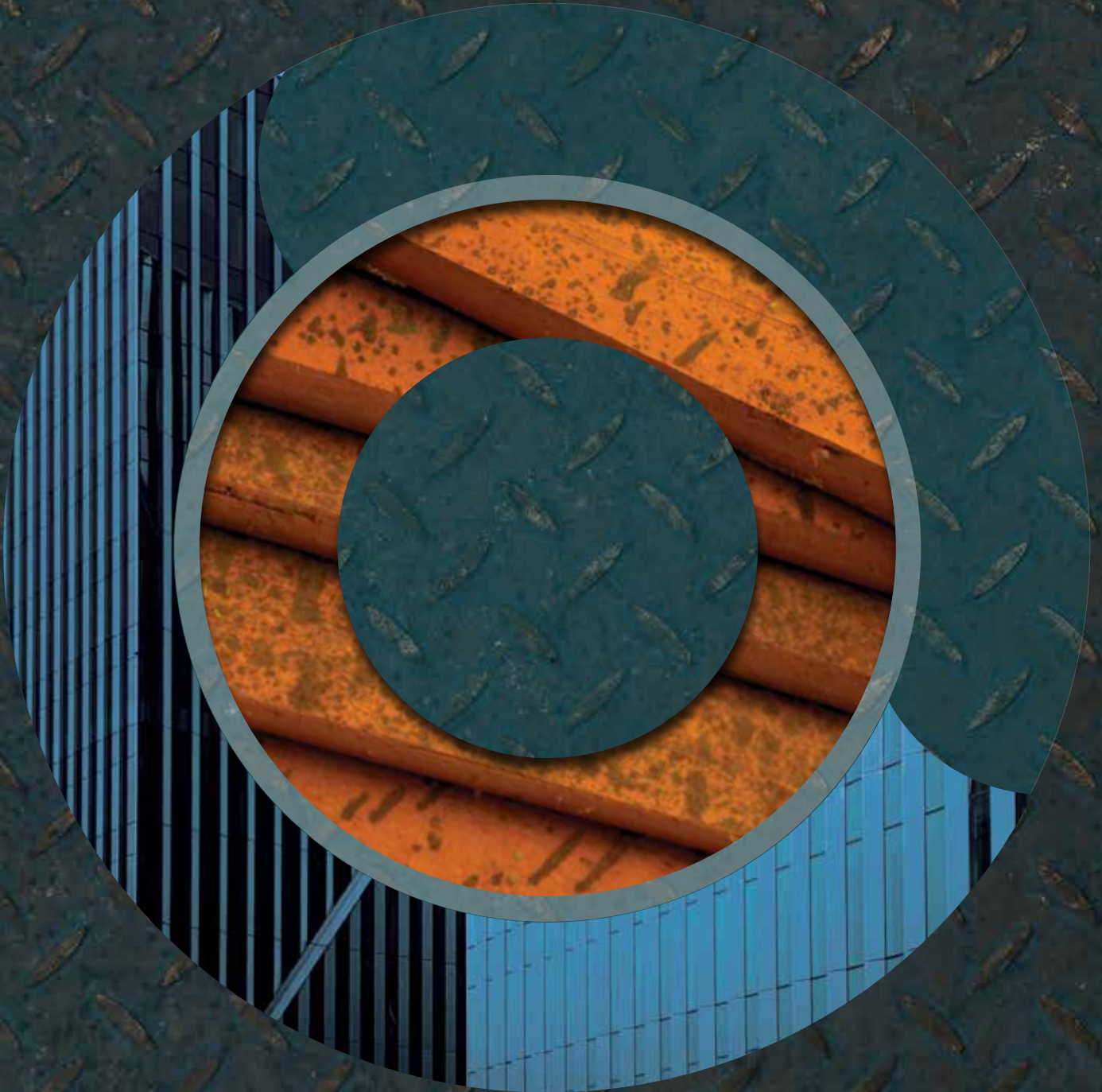


NATIONAL APPRENTICE EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT **2023-2024**



National Apprentice
Employment Network

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National Apprentice
Employment Network

ABOUT NAEN

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

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

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



NAEN BOARD

NAME	BOARD POSITION	ORGANISATION
Sharon Smith	Chair, NSW/ACT Representative	Zeal Futures
Tom Emeleus	Deputy Chair, (from April 2023) Member Representative	NECA Electrical Apprenticeships
Iain McDougall	Member Representative	Hospitality Group Training WA Inc
Stuart Diepeveen	WA Representative	Electrical Group Training
Kathryn Stenson	Member Representative	GTNT Group
Paul Hillberg	QLD/NT Representative	Apprenticeships Queensland
Leanne Wallace	TAS Representative	Work & Training
Peter Andersen	Member Representative	NTHA Trainees & Apprentices
Tracey Kelly	Member representative, (from November 2022) SA Representative (from April 2022)	mteSA
Andrew McCarthy	Member Representative	Victorian Group Training Company
Nick Couper	Member Representative (from November 2023)	NECA Education & Careers
Gideon Perrott	Member Representative (from June 2024)	HunterNet Career Connections



SUB-COMMITTEES

AUDIT BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

Stuart Diepeveen (Chair)
Iain McDougall
Sharon Smith

GOVERNANCE BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

Stuart Diepeveen (Chair)
Sharon Smith
Tom Emeleus

BOARD BIOGRAPHIES

SHARON SMITH



Sharon is the CEO of Zeal Futures, a position she has held since 2012. She has an outstanding record of achievement over 20 plus years as a senior executive in the utilities, regional development, private and Not for profit sectors. This includes Chief Financial Officer and General Manager in various roles leading large operational and shared services teams across Finance, Human Resources, Business Strategy, Communications, 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 as current Director of Zeal Futures and Coleambally Irrigation Cooperative Limited. On the NAEN Board of Directors, Sharon is Chair of the NAEN Board and represents NSW and the ACT, nominated by AEN NSW & ACT.

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 was the Nominated Member for 5 years 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 AEN WA, and a Member of the NAEN Board Audit Sub-Committee. Iain is a Member of the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group for Service and Creative Skills Australia, and a Board Member of FutureNow, the Creative and Leisure Industry Training Council. Iain is a Member Representative on the NAEN Board of Directors.

LEANNE WALLACE



Leanne is the CEO of Work & Training, 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 22 years Leanne has increased her expertise in all facets of Vocational Education and Training. She has held six positions at Work & Training which culminated in her appointment as CEO. Leanne is Chair of AEN TAS, Committee Member of the Local Jobs Program Taskforce North and Northwest Tasmania. As a Board Director of NAEN, Leanne represents the state of Tasmania, nominated by AEN TAS.

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 1990s, after which he worked for a local renewable energy company. In 2004 he moved into training and became a trainer at the College of Electrical Training before moving to EGT as a field officer in 2005. Stuart was promoted to General Manager at EGT in 2007, the role he still holds today. Stuart represents WA on the NAEN Board of Directors, nominated by AEN WA. Stuart is Chair of NAEN's Audit and Governance Sub-Committees.

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 3000 apprentices in that time. Tom is responsible for NECA's group training and training businesses in NSW, QLD and the ACT. Over 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 Group Training and VET to government, the media, industry and the community. Tom is a Member Representative on the NAEN Board of Directors, Deputy Chair and Member NAEN Indigenous Programs Working Group; Chair Apprentice Employment Network NSW & ACT; General Manager NECA Electrical Apprenticeships (NSW/QLD/ACT); Director of Australia New Zealand Electrotechnology Training Alliance; Director E-Oz Energy Skills Australia; Director Electrotechnology and Energy Advisory Board (ACT), Director NSW Utilities and Electrotechnology (ITAB).

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 (RTO) he represented QLD on the National Industry Advisory Council responsible for training package development and maintenance across Australia. Paul represents QLD & NT on the NAEN Board of Directors, nominated by AEN QLD / NT.

KATHRYN STENSON



Kathryn is CEO of GTNT Group, a multi-faceted not-for-profit that began in 1989 as a GTO in Darwin. GTNT Group has since expanded to include office locations in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. GTNT Group not only operate as GTO, they operate an RTO, a local training café, an international foundation project and are an Apprentice Connect Provider delivering the Australian Apprenticeships Support Services Contract. Kathryn joined GTNT Group as CEO in 2012, bringing over 20 years of experience in employment industries with a strong background in governance, strategic planning, management, and business development. In addition to being a Member Representative on the NAEN Board Directors, Kathryn also holds Board positions with the National Australian Apprenticeships Association (NAAA), AEN QLD / NT and YouthWorX NT.

PETER ANDERSEN



Joining Vocational Education and Training in 2000, Peter has held positions as CEO and General Manager of various GTOs and RTOs as well as operating his own company providing recruitment and consultancy services to the industry. In preceding years, Peter was involved in the broadcast industry managing various television, pay TV and radio organisations. Peter was appointed General Manager of NTHA Trainees & Apprentices in November 2020, overseeing a national GTO and recruitment service dedicated to NTHA members and other companies in the timber and building materials sector.

TRACEY KELLY



Tracey is the Chief Executive Officer of mteSA. She has over 26 years in senior management roles in the NGO, health and training sectors where she has been pivotal in developing compliance, risk and governance practices as well as strategic planning, transformation and cultural change. Tracey has worked as a Trainer and Assessor for a large national community not-for-profit organisation and was part of the training team when they transitioned to a Registered Training Organisation. Tracey assisted in the development of some units of competency that were related to the National Program that she managed on their behalf. Tracey holds a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) majoring in HR and Governance and a Graduate Diploma of Applied Corporate Governance and Risk Management. Tracey is currently President of the AEN SA Board and sits on several committees including the Regional Development Leadership Development Program Steering Committee Murray Bridge and Riverland, Murraylands Skills Centre Steering Committee and Business Murray Bridge Committee. Tracey is an active member in both the regional communities and metropolitan areas where her GTO operates and is a passionate advocate of group training and apprenticeships and traineeships.

ANDREW McCARTHY



Andrew is the Chief Executive Officer of Victorian Group Training Company (VGTC), a prominent employer of apprentices and trainees situated in the South West Victoria region for over 20 years. Andrew's background is characterised by expertise in the areas of strategic management and business development. As a member of the Apprenticeship Employment Network in Victoria and, Andrew's unwavering dedication to VGTC's charitable purpose, coupled with his contributions to community initiatives underscores his commitment to both the apprenticeship and training sector and the broader community as a whole. Andrew is also Victoria State appointed Director to the Board of the National Apprentice Employment Network.

GIDEON PERROTT



Gideon is CEO of NECA Education & Careers, a not-for-profit training organisation and the largest employer of electrical apprentices in Victoria and Tasmania. He spent much of his early career in banking, leading large sales, service and marketing teams at both ANZ and NAB in Melbourne. Plus, he consulted to a number of banks, including Standard Chartered Bank and Thai Danu Bank in Asia, as a management consultant with PA Consulting Group. Moving into leading business units in private health insurance with Medibank, and then in energy retailing with Energy Australia, Gideon refined his strategy and business leadership skills in highly competitive and highly regulated markets. After joining the executive team at one of Victoria's most successful TAFE institutes in 2018, Gideon discovered a passion for vocational education and training. He brings this passion into NECA Education & Careers while leveraging all of the skills and experience gained from a diverse and successful corporate leadership career. Gideon is a Member Representative on the NAEN Board of Directors.

NICK COUPER



Nick Couper is the Chief Operating Officer with HunterNet Career Connections, with over 15 years' experience in the Vocational Education and Training sector. Nick has held various senior roles in both regional and national group training companies. Nick has also worked in executive positions in National private registered training organisations. Most recently Nick has spent the past 7 years with HunterNet Career Connection (previously HunterNet Group Training) where the organisation has undergone significant growth and diversification into a trusted national provider of apprentices and trainees. Professionally, Nick values creating new opportunities for organisations and their employees to be able to receive quality training with outcomes to set themselves up for success. This can be achieved by understanding business plans and strategically mapping the staffing resources needs at the correct timeline of an organisations' business plan.



STAFF

DIANNE DAYHEW Chief Executive Officer

KRISTEN SYDNEY Executive Support and Projects Officer

ANGIE TURAY Projects Manager

CONTRACTED SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

BOB BOWDEN Communications Advisor

KEN LANCERO Company Accountant

LEONIE STANFIELD Careers Projects Manager

OUR MISSION

- ✦ To advance group training as a high quality, work-based approach to learning and training which is supported by professionally managed mentoring, and is regulated by national standards;
- ✦ To champion the successes of Group Training Organisations (GTOs), including their role in addressing youth unemployment, creating and supporting equitable and inclusive career pathways, and facilitating successful new career transitions for displaced workers;
- ✦ To be the first point of contact for the Australian Government as the voice for the national GTO network, informing evidence-based policy on work-based learning;
- ✦ To promote the benefits of group training to existing and future stakeholders, including through directing government investment to facilitate improved employment and skills outcomes; and,
- ✦ To support NAEN members through a cohesive, thriving and connected network, providing value-added information and relevant and timely business opportunities.



CHAIR'S REPORT

The 2023-24 financial year was one of significant change across the vocational education and training (VET) sector, and one of growth and advancement for group training and the national peak body.

A new five-year National Skills Agreement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories (the first in several years) marked the commencement of a significant suite of sector reforms in areas including gender equality, Closing the Gap, net zero transformation, care services, sovereign capability, and regulation of VET qualifications.

The bedding down of Jobs and Skills Australia, and the establishment of ten new Jobs and Skills Councils inserted the final pieces of an enhanced VET architecture, and provided confidence as we move forward.

For the apprenticeship sector, the announcement of the Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System was a big step in addressing some of the challenges and obstacles to improved apprentice attraction, retention and completion.

NAEN's submission to review reflected the breadth of views across the NAEN network and presented a case for many of the key features of group training to be replicated across the apprenticeship system. NAEN acknowledges the positive engagement it enjoyed with the reviewers, Justice Iain Ross and Ms Lisa Paul, including a dedicated session with the NAEN Board.

Rounding out a year of landmark change, the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) announced the successful providers of Australian Apprenticeship Support Services, to commence from 1 July 2024. These services are an important element of the apprentice experience, and supplement those undertaken by Group Training Organisations (GTOs).

One of the highlights of the year was the NAEN 2023 National Conference, 'New Skills for a New World', held over two days in Melbourne in August. This was an extraordinary gathering of expert speakers, panellists and NAEN members who were able to partake in a host of activities, including a member luncheon, welcome reception, gala dinner and the conference itself.



One of the features of the national conference was the awarding of NAEN Life Membership to two esteemed figures from the GTO network – Stan Liaros and Fred Maddern OBE. All of us who attended were greatly honoured to welcome Stan and Fred to this distinguished group.

There were a number of changes to the makeup of the NAEN Board in 2023-24. At the Annual General Meeting in Hobart in November, Peter Andersen, representing the National Timber & Hardware Association, resigned and was replaced by Nick Couper, the Chief Operating Officer of HunterNet Career Connections.

In June 2024, NAEN held an election for members with GTOs headquartered in Victoria, at which Andrew McCarthy was elected the State Appointed Director. Andrew, who is the Managing Director and CEO of Victorian Group Training Co Ltd, has been on the NAEN Board since 2022 as a Member Elected Director.

Andrew's election as the State Appointed Director for Victoria created a casual vacancy. Gideon Perrott, the Chief Executive Officer of NECA Education & Careers, accepted the Board's invitation to serve as a Member Elected Director, ahead of an election for the position at the NAEN AGM in December 2024.

I would like to extend my immense thanks to all current and former NAEN Board Directors for the great contribution they make. Their knowledge and expertise is invaluable. As Chair, I am enormously grateful for their dedication, time and commitment.

I also extend my appreciation to NAEN Chief Executive Officer, Dianne Dayhew, for her outstanding work in leading the team that has achieved so much over the past year and seen group training's presence and influence greatly increase.

Finally, I acknowledge the ongoing support of our Patron, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd). NAEN is honoured and appreciative for the support of the Governor-General and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley.

Sharon Smith

Chair



CEO'S REPORT

NAEN and its member Group Training Organisations (GTOs) experienced a high level of activity during 2023-24, as governments embarked on significant skills reform initiatives that impacted apprentice employment.

NAEN's advocacy and consultations stretched across a wide array of industries and different levels of government.

The federal government's Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System presented a major opportunity to focus attention on the remarkable work of GTOs in supporting apprentices and trainees. With so much attention on unsatisfactory completion rates, the positive experience and practices of GTOs was of considerable interest during NAEN's consultations with the review panel. We look forward to seeing the results of this very important piece of work.

The federal Budget in May included support for small and medium businesses taking on group training apprentices in clean energy, construction and manufacturing, with up to \$1,500 in annual reimbursements over the life of an apprenticeship.

The Budget also included an additional \$2000 (to \$5000 in total) for apprentices in priority industries for a one-year period while the apprentice review is underway.

Another welcome initiative, the Australian Skills Guarantee, set a minimum 10 per cent labour hours for apprentices and women on major Commonwealth-funded projects.

NAEN extends its appreciation to the Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon Brendan O'Connor and his team, as well as to the Department, for their constructive engagement on many of the issues vital to NAEN and its members.

NAEN was delighted to host another successful National Conference, attracting several hundred delegates to Melbourne and a host of exceptional speakers and panellists in what was an extremely well-received event.

Another standout was the 2023 Today's Skills; Tomorrow's Leaders (TSTL) program, which saw 25 of Australia's top apprentices and trainees spend a week in Canberra on an intensive career and professional development program. TSTL was launched at Government House by the Governor-General and NAEN Patron, His Excellency, General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd). We extend our appreciation to the National Careers Institute for its support of TSTL.

NAEN's work in Indigenous communities continued with the Targeted Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG) program which provided funding to GTOs to support eligible full-time First Nations apprentices or trainees during the first six months of their employment and training.

Importantly, NAEN will build on its work with Indigenous communities, having secured a contract under the Commonwealth's Indigenous Skills and Employment Program to deliver training and employment solutions in the Alice Springs Town Camps.

I would like to extend congratulations to the GTOs that celebrated milestone anniversaries during the period. The strength, longevity and achievement of these GTOs has been remarkable.

NAEN member GTOs perform extraordinary work with tens of thousands of apprentices and trainees across the country. I congratulate them on the marvellous work that do, each and every day.

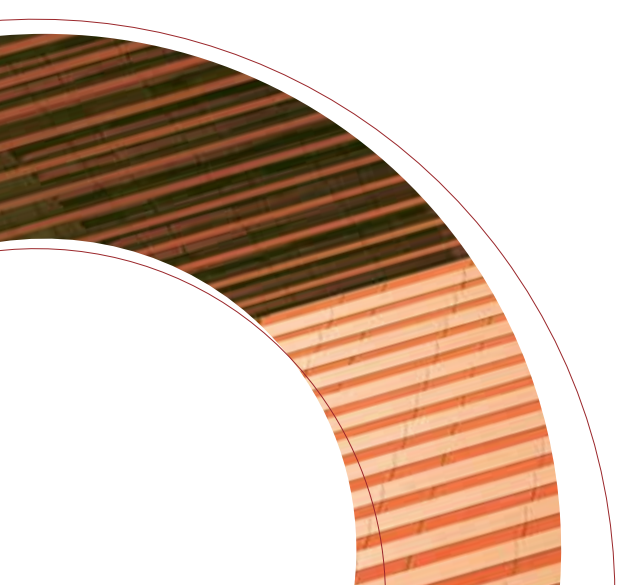
I also extend my appreciation to the state and territory Apprentice Employment Networks for their support, advice and input on many of our important engagements.

The growing network of NAEN members is supported by a small team of NAEN employees and consultants who strive to deliver the service that our members deserve.

I also thank the NAEN Board, led by Chair Sharon Smith, who bring their collective knowledge and wisdom to so many of the tasks and challenges that we meet, daily.

Dianne Dayhew

Chief Executive Officer



ADVOCACY

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

- + Australian Skills Guarantee
- + Request for Tender, New Energy Apprenticeship Mentoring Program
- + Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System
- + Federal Budget
- + Senate Inquiry into the Perceptions and Status of VET
- + The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations inquiry into 'Supporting Women to Achieve VET-based Careers'.



EVENTS



NAEN 2023 National Conference, 'New Skills for a New World', Melbourne, August 2023

With the theme, 'New Skills for a New World', the conference attracted more than 200 delegates over two days at Marvel Stadium, coinciding with Melbourne's week-long skills showcase that included the WorldSkills Australia National Championships.

The conference focus was on workforce challenges in some of the most pressing industry sectors including advanced manufacturing, critical minerals, the care economy and defence capability, including meeting the large skills needs of the AUKUS submarine building project.

Speakers included:

- The Honourable Brendan O'Connor MP, Minister for Skills & Training
- Professor Peter Dawkins AO, Director, Jobs and Skills Australia
- Craig Robertson, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Skills Authority
- Stephen Koukoulas, Economist
- Simon Kuestenmacher, Demographer
- The conference also featured three industry panels: 'The Big Skills Drive', 'It's Time to Chat GPT and AI', and 'The Right Support for Youth Starting Work'
- Simon Kuestenmacher, Demographer



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'Ideas, Information & Inspiration' Webinar Series

NAEN's 'Ideas, Information & Inspiration' Webinar Series continued in 2023-24 with topics and expert speakers directly relevant to NAEN members. Topics included:

- Unlocking Defence Potential: Navigating Funding, Employment, and Transition Strategies
- Global Footprints Scholarships
- Empowering Women in Trades: Breaking Barriers and Sustaining Success



MEMBER ALERTS AND NEWSLETTERS

NAEN published regular Newsletters covering matters of interest across the VET sector.

NAEN also issued timely Member Alerts to keep members up to date with latest developments immediately relevant to their business operations. These included:

- A series of WorkSight/NAEN, Workplace relations updates
- New Australian Apprenticeships website
- Notice of RFT for apprentice support services
- National Conference program released
- Closing the labour hire loopholes legislation
- Commonwealth Employment White Paper released
- Major reports released by Jobs and Skills Australia
- National Skills Agreement signed
- 2024 Skills Priority List consultation opens
- Release of discussion paper on women's equality
- Commonwealth announces review of apprenticeships and incentive payments
- Announcement of Australian Apprenticeship Support Services 2024-26
- NAEN Board Changes

MEDIA RELATIONS

NAEN provided regular information, responses and feedback to the media and was often a first point of call for journalists seeking information on a range of issues impacting apprenticeships and traineeships.

NAEN distributes media releases to print and broadcast outlets and provides comment and background on a range of issues relevant to the sector.

NAEN Chief Executive Officer Dianne Dayhew is regularly sought for media comment and features in a range of media outlets.

OUR PROGRAMS

NSW ITAB PROGRAM

NAEN operates the contract for the NSW Building, Construction, Resources and Infrastructure (BCRI) Industry Training Advisory Body.

Under the contract, BCRI undertakes liaison with industry and report to Training Services NSW, within the NSW Department of Education.

BCRI's role is to advise on issues related to skills and workforce development, licencing, and apprenticeships and traineeships, within its industry areas.

NAEN's contract has been extended for 2024-25.

TODAY'S SKILLS: TOMORROW'S LEADERS

NAEN's landmark professional development program for apprentices and trainees, the Today's Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders' (TSTL) program, continued in 2023, with 25 participants selected.

A total of 20 apprentices and trainees were selected by member GTOs, and five finalists came from the 2022 Australian Training Awards.

The week-long intensive residential program was held in Canberra in September 2023. It was launched by NAEN Patron, the Governor-General, His Excellency, General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd).

The group also spent a day at Parliament House where they met ministers and MPs including Skills and Training Minister the Hon Brendan O'Connor and Shadow Minister the Hon Sussan Ley.

NAEN extends its thanks to the National Careers Institute for its support in funding this successful and long-running initiative.



NAEN INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS

NAEN Tailored Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG)

The NAEN Tailored Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG) program achieved significant milestones during 2023-24 period, with all 260 allocated commencement placements filled before the recruitment cutoff on 30 June 2024. In collaboration with 24-member Group Training Organisations (GTOs), the program supported First Nations apprentices and trainees, delivering valuable employment and training opportunities across the nation. This initiative played a key role in fostering meaningful pathways for participants, contributing to broader objectives of skills development and workforce integration.

While all initial commencement spots were utilised, the program allowed for substitute placements for candidates who exited before reaching key milestones. This flexibility ensured continued access to milestone funding for new candidates, maximising resources to achieve program objectives. NAEN continues to work closely with NIAA to navigate substitution claims and facilitate efficient processing for our partners. However, future extensions of the program beyond December 2024 are not anticipated.

Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP)

The Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) contract was formally executed in June 2024, commencing on 1 July 2024, in partnership with GTNT Group to deliver the NAEN ISEP program for Alice Springs Town Camp youth.

Recruitment is currently underway for key roles, including a Community Engagement Officer and a Contract Manager for First Nations Projects, to support this critical initiative. These roles will work collaboratively with GTNT Group, local First Nations communities, and stakeholders in Alice Springs to deliver on program objectives.

The program's scope includes engaging youth from Alice Springs Town Camps, hosting face-to-face community events, delivering work readiness and foundation skills training, providing cultural awareness training and mentoring for host employers' leadership teams, and upskilling Indigenous employment consultants.

The long-term goals of the program aim to establish culturally safe workplaces, increase youth participation in traineeships and apprenticeships, create role models, strengthen community-industry trust, and improve employment rates within the camp areas.

NAEN looks forward to driving meaningful change through ISEP, fostering sustainable outcomes for the region and empowering local communities.



STATE AND TERRITORY REPORTS



NEW SOUTH WALES & AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

BY JASON SULTANA, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The 2023-2024 period has presented ongoing challenges for Group Training Organisations operating in NSW and ACT. These challenges include persistent candidate shortages, increased cancellations driven by cost-of-living pressures, and rising operating costs due to the workers' compensation premium calculations imposed by the NSW and ACT governments. We have significant concerns on what the changes to the Federal Government incentives will have in the market in NSW and ACT

Despite these hurdles, the GTO market has seen growth, with 48 GTOs now registered in NSW.

We remain committed to working closely with the NSW and ACT governments to ensure GTOs continue to have opportunities for meaningful participation.

GTOs play a vital role in several key government programs, including:

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

Over the past 12 months, we have observed a shift in dynamics within our GTOs, which now include:

- An increasing number offering “managed services” as a solution for clients
- A higher volume of vacancies being filled
- Reduced timeframes for vacancy fulfillment
- An average completion rate of 68%

We extend our gratitude to our members, Executive Team, and NAEN for their ongoing support and guidance over the past year. Special thanks to our NSW and ACT representatives on the NAEN Board—Sharon Smith, Tom Emeleus, and Nick Couper—for their valuable contributions at the national level.



QUEENSLAND & NORTHERN TERRITORY

BY CRAIG WESTWOOD, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Both Queensland and Northern Territory will leave 2024 with the experience of elections shaping the employment and training policy space for 2025. At time of writing, we await both a clear direction forward on skills in the NT following a change of government and await to see whether Queensland will follow suit after a decade of Labor government. Notwithstanding, Members continue to navigate “two speed” markets in both Queensland and the Northern Territory. Economic demand for skills that should signal strong conditions are spoiled by social, economic, and industrial relations obstacles that stifle both candidate attraction and retention and long-term host employer confidence. The balance of 2024 seems to be described as a “wait and see” period as Members look to renewed governments and skills strategies in 2025.

New and interstate Group Training Organisations continue to target the long-term opportunities in the Queensland economy – using FY25 as their establishment year. We welcome Master Painters Australia and their new Wettrades Apprenticeships brand to the sector as we continue to support may new GTOs to complete their Queensland registration.

During the period, the Queensland GTO Pre Apprenticeship Program entered its fourth round with many projects being approved for delivery out to July 2025. These programs offer “paid from day one” opportunities for Queenslanders seeking downstream apprenticeships in the construction, engineering, hospitality, and automotive sectors with this round again being reserved for candidates representing diverse, disengaged, and disadvantaged groups.

The year saw East Coast Apprenticeships Chief Executive and NAEN Life Member Alan Sparks step-down to take up new opportunities in the consulting space. We acknowledge both Alan’s long-term commitment to Group Training and reflect on the hundreds positively impacted by his commitment. We welcome Rebecca Atkinson as the new Chief Executive of East Coast Apprenticeships and will enjoy leaning regularly on the senior experience she brings from her previous role within the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training.

This year we honour Karen Simpson of Australian Training Company as a Life Member of AENQNT. Karen has been a consistent contributor to Queensland’s employment and training sector for over 25 years. She was at the sharp end of the establishment of our modern-day VET sector, moving from Commonwealth services into the first phases of the Howard era’s outsourcing of Australia’s education, employment and training framework. In addition, Karen is a former member of Queensland’s Training Employment and Recognition Council (TERC). Until 2012, the Council regulated and administered training organisations, course accreditation, training contracts for apprenticeships and traineeships and vocational placements.

And finally, we welcome Christine Zechowski representing MRAEL as the newest Director of AENQNT. Christine is one of our sector’s strongest leaders, with a deep background in Group Training in Queensland (especially in our regional centres) and a broad national remit via her role with IntoWork Australia. Like all of our Directors, we acknowledge and thank them for their time and commitment to AENQNT and the sector.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BY IRENE WALKER, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

AEN WA is proud to have celebrated its 30th business anniversary in 2023-24, highlighting three decades of support for member group training organisations across Western Australia.

This year our membership reached an all-time high with 24 members. Their engagement has been vital to our growth.

Our advocacy efforts resulted in several key outcomes, including addressing GTO concerns about new Labour Hire regulations, securing an extension for the Group Training Wage subsidy for 150 additional apprentices in building and construction, highlighting suggestions to address lecturer skill shortages, addressing childcare facility hours that are a barrier for working families in the construction industry, noting the shortage of aged and community care workers, and advocating for improved government marketing to promote apprenticeships.

The 2023 Awards for Excellence was our chosen event to celebrate our 30th anniversary, attended by 186 guests, where our finalists, winners and special recognition recipients were rewarded with a record \$6,250 in vouchers and prizes. Congratulations to all our members' apprentices and trainees, and a big thank you to our sponsors and charity partners.

Other notable accolades achieved by our members include the WA State Training Awards, where WPC Group had a finalist in the Trainee of the Year Award, and WorldSkills Championships, where Antoinette Jackson from MPA Skills won a silver medal in painting and decorating.

Overall AEN WA had a good year, but not without its challenges. We continue to have a strong presence in the WA market and look forward to another productive year ahead. Thank you to our dedicated management committee and to our members who trust us to advocate on their behalf.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

BY JASON POLGREEN, PRESIDENT

The 2023-24 financial year has been a challenging period for AEN SA, Group Training, the VET sector, and the South Australia Government. The year has been full of many AEN activities, advocating for GTOs and training, as well as maintaining resources for our Members.

The AEN SA Membership currently sits at 21 GTO Full Members and 3 Associate Members.

Recent data supplied by Skills SA, indicates that commencement numbers for both Direct Employers and GTOs are down by 29% (9,205) when compared to the same period in 2022-23. According to the most recent figures supplied by Skills SA in March 2024, apprentices, and trainees currently in training, employed by GTOs is 4,285. This equates to 3,560 apprentices and 725 trainees employed by South Australian GTOs compared to the total number employed by all employers of 24,765 (16,580 apprentices & 8,185 trainees). This has seen a decline in GTO market share from previous years from 22% down to 17% for the March 2024 period.

Recently, State Treasurer Stephen Mulligan MP unveiled the allocation of South Australian Government funds in the 2024-2025 budget.

The Treasurer described this budget as a significant investment in jobs for the future, including partnering with the Commonwealth Government to address critical skills shortages and increase training in key industries for our economy.

AEN SA made recommendations that the South Australian Government continue the investment in the GTO Boost Funding as well as other initiatives relating to Out-of-Trade Apprentices and increasing the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships across a variety of skill shortage areas. The South Australian Budget released in June 2024, saw the Malinauskas Labor Government announce the continuation of GTO Boost Funding. Unfortunately, this funding is currently only supporting mature age apprentices rather than the previously funded cohorts which included Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; a person living with a disability; Adult Apprentice or Trainee; School-based Apprentice or Trainee; and All Female learners. This was disappointing not only due to the restriction on the cohort groups involved but equally no change to the number of training contracts funded or the amounts per training contract per annum. (260 training contracts and \$5,200 respectively).

We were fortunate to have confirmation that the SAGTP Funding would continue in the next financial year and the AEN SA Executive will continue to explore other opportunities to attract funding for the betterment of the organisation and service provision for our members.

Continuing concerns for GTOs are the attraction of suitable candidates to fill vacancies as well as the poaching of apprentices by employers offering greater wages and luring them away from their chosen trade pathway. Additionally, the mental health, wellbeing and resilience of Apprentices and Trainees continue to affect the retention and completion rates.

AEN SA continues to advocate for and raise the status and profile of Apprenticeships in Schools to show that they are equally valued career pathway to a university pathway.

AEN SA continues to maintain resources available for Members use including:

- The AEN SA Safety Through Training Online Safety & Induction Videos.
- The SMARTKit
- The AEN SA WHS - Minimum Standards for GTOs.

AEN SA has also seen change at both the Executive and Board level, with previous Executive Officer Troy Aitken leaving the organisation in March, and the commencement of Matt Lowe as the new Executive Officer. Matt brings to the role a wealth of experience in commercial leadership roles across both membership-based organisations and GTO / RTO sectors. At Board level, Tracey Kelly as our President and Board member also departed the organisation after outstanding service, initially as a Board Member, then as AEN SA President across a five-year period.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our members, who have worked tirelessly this year to assist South Australian businesses, and to create career opportunities for South Australians, particularly young South Australians.

The success of Group Training in South Australia can be attributed to the strong relationships and support received from, the State Government; Skills SA; the AEN National Network; and most importantly our Board and Member Group Training Organisations, who work tirelessly to promote apprenticeships, traineeships, and the virtues of the Group Training model.

I would like to thank the staff of the Association, my fellow Board Directors, Greg Megaw, Vice Chair; Brian Rungie; Tina Reis; Greg Bassani and Luke Walsh, as well as Executive Officer Matt Lowe, and our Member GTOs, for their ongoing support in championing the interests of Group Training in South Australia.



VICTORIA

BY GARY WORKMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

During 2023-24, the AEN has worked with various governments on several reviews aimed at improving apprenticeship safety, increasing participation and diversity, and finding ways to improve completion rates—areas in which GTOs outperform direct employment. These reviews include:

- Victorian Apprenticeships Taskforce
- Australian Apprenticeship Incentives Review
- Women in Trade Apprenticeships

These reviews have emphasised the need to focus on apprentice completion rates, greater support for small businesses, and apprentice safety. It is pleasing to report that our members are performing strongly in these areas, as highlighted in our GTO Completions Report, released in June 2024.

It was great to see many members celebrate their 40th anniversaries during the year, while the association conservatively estimated that the network has now supported over 250,000 apprentices, which we celebrated with government and industry partners in October 2023.

I would like to thank members for supporting a number of programs delivered over several years, which are now in their final stages, including:

- Apprenticeships Victoria Big Build Program
- Construction Skills Pathway
- Horticulture Pilot Program
- Women in Trades – Multi-Industry Pre-Apprenticeships
- Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees Program

Many of these programs commenced during COVID and provided valuable support to the network and local communities by helping youth transition into apprenticeships. We look forward to continuing our work with the Victorian Government, as these programs have shown there is an ongoing need. Through the State and Federal Government budget announcements, other priorities will include:

- Metropolitan and regional social housing
- Renewable energy and net zero projects
- The establishment of the State Electrical Commission, requiring 6,000 new apprentices
- Ongoing major infrastructure projects.

At an international level, the association continues to support international apprenticeship scholarships and established the Quality Apprenticeship Employer Accreditation Program in June 2023, based on globally agreed standards for Quality Apprenticeships. This new program will provide valuable data and highlight the important role employers play in the development of apprentices.

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



LIFE MEMBERS

Two longstanding representatives of the group training network were made Life Members during the NAEN National conference in Melbourne.

Stan Liaros, the CEO and Secretary of the Board of Group Training South West, which trades as The Apprentice and Traineeship Company, was made a Life Member in recognition of almost thirty years of service with group training.

Fred Maddern OBE, the Chair of WPC Group, was also announced as a Life Member, in recognition of more than 40 years' contribution to group training and the broader VET sector.

NAEN Board Chair Sharon Smith presented the Life Member awards at the conference gala dinner.

Stan and Fred join 21 Life Members who have received the award since it commenced in 1996.



OUR MEMBERS

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



National Apprenticeship
Employment Network

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



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