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**Report to E-OZ and the Department of
Education and Training on outcomes of
Project Enhancement Activities Project**

as part of the

**Energy Industry Apprentice Progression
Management System (EIAPMS) Project**

October 2015

e**OZ**
ENERGY SKILLS
AUSTRALIA

Australian Government

Note:
This report is in two parts, one is the outline of the findings of discussions with employers and targeted key stakeholders and the other is the formal position of the National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA) of Australia on issues identified through the consultations.

This report was compiled by NECA and with the support of Business Group Australia Pty Limited (BGA). NECA and BGA thank all of those consulted, particularly electrical contractors and electricians, for their valuable time taken out from undertaking their personal business activities, often for many hours and over numerous occasions.

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BGA
Business **Group** Australia

Prepared with the assistance of Business Group Australia Pty Limited

1. Methodology and Project Focus

Since November 2014, NECA has undertaken extensive consultations with employers and other key stakeholders to examine the strengths of the current Apprenticeship system and areas where the system could be improved for employers and apprentices in training for the Certificate III in Electrotechnology. As part of this effort NECA engaged Business Group Australia (BGA) to assist in the consultations to ensure an independent analysis was provided. The major purpose of the consultations have been to determine employer and industry's view on future training arrangements. This has included a review of the E-OZ EIAPMS Pilot Project. E-OZ is primarily funded by the Federal Government and is the national Industry Skills Council for the electrical industry.

This review comprised of three elements - an employer engagement exercise to test employers' views on the EIAPMS; a review of the EIAPMS project features to examine what should be taken forward from the E-OZ EIAPMS Pilot Project after the Project's completion post June 2015; and the development of information kits on competency based progression and relevant support arrangements following industry endorsement. A work plan for each element was prepared and provided to E-OZ. It was agreed that the broader employer engagement and review process would be embarked on together.

The E-OZ EIAPMS Pilot Project review included:

- Examining stakeholder understanding and potential effectiveness of the Pilot and identified tools/ strategies for managing apprentices progression; and

- Identifying assistance and support needed by employers to apply pilot strategies in workplace settings to improve the performance of apprentices post project.

Within the context of the E-OZ EIAPMS Pilot Project, key project elements have been reviewed across the following domains:

- *Apprentice Register and Data Management Systems* - e.g. the use of the National Apprenticeship Register for recruitment to allow employer access to pre-assessed candidates and the adoption of electronic profiling and the associated administrative arrangements;

- *Apprentice Readiness Framework* - e.g. the use of a national industry recruitment benchmark and skills needs assessment tool and the long-term process around delivering the tool;

- *Apprentice Progression Based on developed industry benchmarks* e.g. understanding of the implications of recent Fair Work Australia decisions on the apprenticeship arrangements and any subsequent deliberations, the CBP wage implications and associated processes industry benchmark assessment process, benchmarking and other important stages required to complete satisfactory progression, employer understanding and support, and links to and effectiveness of profiling tools and processes;

- *Apprentice Support* - e.g. the use and role of the Mentor/Advisor to the apprentice, employer and the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in providing additional assistance for apprentices to meet benchmark progression benchmarks;

- *Currency of the current Certificate III in Electrotechnology* – workplace suitability across all sectors of the industry, understanding of employers of the Training Package, knowledge of employers of the current major organisations in the national training system including E-OZ; and

- *Training and Flexibility* - e.g. the potential of blended learning in the industry and the relevance of online and other training materials, up front off-the-job delivery, block release, use of afterhours and RDOs for training.

A stakeholder engagement plan and a consultation timetable was prepared and implemented and these included:

- One-on-one sessions with targeted companies at owner/operator level;

- One-on-one sessions with "apprentice masters" or team leaders or supervisors;

- Small group sessions with owners, supervisors and apprentices;

- One-on-one meetings with different parts of large national companies including across states;

- Sessions with group training and/or RTOs;

- Sessions at NECA meetings with companies at state level, some NECA State Boards or Executives;

- Briefings and feedback for NECA Mentor/Advisors and their supervisors;

- Several sessions at NECA Education and Training Advisory Group meetings;

- Larger sessions across companies; and

- Events with large numbers of contractors seeking their input direct to BGA by phone or email.

Consultation sessions have been held across Australia, including regional meetings in Queensland, NSW, Tasmania and Victoria. In addition, phone interviews were conducted with targeted companies, including some involved in the EIAPMS Project. Employers targeted in the consultation process have included both those participating in the E-OZ EIAPMS Pilot Project, as well as those that have not been involved. 500 employers and other stakeholders have been canvassed with approximately 230 involved in in-depth specific discussion sessions *(Attachment 1).*

The views gathered through this process have been put to NECA to determine a formal view to government taking account of the feedback. Relevant materials to employers, apprentices and RTOs are being developed after the broad consultation as it was imperative that they support relevant changes and also what form they wanted the information presented in and what other issues needed to be covered.
A series of pamphlets to advertise the seminars and Project were developed and distributed through the employer community. An '*Advance Organiser'* document *(Attachment 2)* to provide the context and framework for the consultation sessions, and to establish key prompts and discussion points to prepare participants for the consultation process was developed.

Structure of the Report

Each section of the Report is presented in 2 parts:

- *Key themes and issues that have emerged from employer and stakeholder consultations* - employers and stakeholders were offered the opportunity to comment on any aspect of current training arrangements that they wished to be raised with government. This ensured that maximum quality employer input was gained rather than just focusing on the E-OZ EIAPMS Pilot Project. The views of employers and stakeholders views have been presented faithfully and reflect key aspects of issues and positons raised by the majority of respondents or where a particular organisation has been specified; and

- *NECA Policy position across the key project elements* - NECA positions have been formed with the employer and stakeholders' views in mind. Consultations were undertaken through a separate process as part of the governance process of NECA including consideration by the NECA Education and Training Advisory Group, the NECA Secretariat and NECA Executive and Council. This process has included targeted discussions on the *key project elements* (outcomes, tools and processes) including an assessment of their effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness to all employers whether they were involved in the Project or not. The position of NECA has been based on consideration of:

  - The extent to which project elements are consistent with industry priorities;
  - The key achievements for each of the project elements;
  - The needs of employers/and apprentices in relation to support;
  - Gaps between the needs of employers and support and the outcomes and project elements;
  - To what extent has the introduction of the key project elements improved the environment for employers and apprentices i.e. has it improved the relevance of training in the workplace to promote flexible progression, consistent assessment, industry verified outcomes; and
  - Development of a Program for setting future directions:
    - factors influencing project outcomes;
    - extent of alignment with VET sector reforms;
    - ability of the initiative to industry capacity to deliver key project elements;
    - future management and governance arrangements;
    - the extent to which the project elements will provide value for money;
    - future structures to deliver priorities for support;
    - recommendation for future development; and
    - other issues that may be required for future program consideration.

It is unfortunate that this process was conducted towards the end of the EIAPMS Project as it was clear that there was no real employer involvement in the development of the Pilot Project proposal and certainly no substantive input into the key elements of the Project. It was also evident that key features were not supported by a large number of stakeholders through the implementation of the project, particularly in some states.

2. Apprentice Readiness, Recruitment Processes and other Employer Support Arrangements

Background

A range of issues in relation to apprentice readiness, recruitment and selection were canvassed during consultations, with a particular focus on:

- Strategies for employing an apprentice who is *'ready'* – matching apprentices with an employer;

- What constitutes *'high quality recruitment'* and making sure there is a *'good fit'* between the apprentice, the employer and the job; and

- What are the standards identified as that which 'provides' potential apprentices with the greatest opportunity of success.

There was general agreement that a focus on *'good recruitment'* was needed to increase the likelihood of an apprentice completing their apprenticeship. The majority of matching (outside the Pilot project) is currently done through non-specialised job search websites, word of mouth or networks. There was concern expressed by many employers of the lack of proper rigorous processes used by some employers, particularly smaller employers. There was also concern at the practice of employing *"sons of friends"* irrespective of their capacity or ability which in many cases led to non-completions of apprenticeships.

A *'recruitment tool'* tailored to meet the specific needs of the industry and aimed at improving the matching up of potential apprentices to employers is seen of particular benefit to small and medium employers that do not have the capacity to undertake extensive benchmarking of their own apprenticeship candidates. In some cases, use is already made of industry developed selection resources (mainly by NECA Group Training Organisations) whether or not the individual companies were participating in the NECA employment and training activities.

A national industry recruitment and skills needs assessment tool is seen as a positive way forward to address a range of issues arising from employer feedback:

- Quality of applicants - entrants to training did not have prerequisite skills, knowledge and aptitude, especially knowledge of careers in electro technology;

- Employer use of recruitment and induction procedures to attract and retain good quality apprentices;

- Ensuring a good *'fit'* between the apprentice, their employer and the industry;

- Accessing correct training and career information;

- Selecting applicants who have awareness and aptitude for the industry; and

- Work and recruitment practices are seen as an important contributor to productivity and completion which reduce recruitment costs for employers.

The Readiness Assessment (RA)

Apprentices who entered the Pilot Project sat a Readiness Assessment Test (*RA)* with a specific focus on numeracy (maths) skills, to ensure they had the technical capacity to undertake their training. Employers were very interested in this type of tool and key themes raised during the consultations included:

- The role of the *RA* in identifying and addressing potential barriers to success before a candidate begins their apprenticeship;

- The *RA's* capacity to form the basis of the apprentice's skills profile – which can be developed as they progress through their apprenticeship and guide the ongoing provision of support services;

- Who organises and pays for the *RA*; and

- The *RA's* capacity to identify the issues which an individual may need to assist them to be more productive from the outset in the workplace and complete their onerous off-the-job requirement.

Generally there is strong overall support for a *"better way"* forward in the face of widespread pessimism at dropping apprentice numbers and the lower standard of applications. For those employers participating in the E-OZ EIAPMS Pilot Project:

- General consensus was that the *RA* was a valuable tool and should be continued - '*the use of the RA was "fantastic" and would welcome a National RA, aptitude and practical recruitment process'*;

- Some employers utilised their own aptitude test and hands skills in conjunction with *RA* as part of the application process;

- Some employers recruited their own candidates but had the Advisor/Mentors undertake the *RA* and provide a full *RA* report for their apprentices from their mentor;

- Most employers supported the use of the *RA* as an indicator to what additional support needed to be provided;

- There was an issue regarding the number of times a potential apprentice sat the test and most thought that this should be reported in their results;

- There is a strong reliance on assistance from the Mentors and some questioned how this was sustainable into the future;

- Some employers asked about the costs of this after the pilot;

- Comments were passed that the apprentices who had undertaken the *RA* were better performers in their off-the job studies; and

- Some employers commented that they could see no glaring benefit to the overall program apart from the *RA*.

There is no doubt that the RA was the most widely supported Project outcome - whether the employer was involved in the project or not. Feedback from those that were familiar with the *RA* indicated that improvements had been made during the course of the Project.

The RTOs who participated in the Project saw the usefulness of the process, particularly where they identified some literacy and numeracy needs with the student and applied this as a remedial step in the early parts of their off-the-job training. There is no doubt there are costs involved to each RTO and these would have been more substantial if the Mentors were not available to conduct most of the tests during the Pilot Project.

A National Industry Recruitment Tool

There was a consistent view across the vast majority of employers that a national industry recruitment and skills needs assessment tool should not only include the RA to assess an individual's capabilities against identified literacy and numeracy requirements for successfully progressing through the industry qualification, but should also have the capacity to identify and report on the personal attributes that contribute to overall employability. This includes key attributes for employability in the industry through:

- *A Self-Assessment Screening Process* - which should be designed to assist potential candidates in considering their suitability for positions as apprentices in a specific sector of the industry and assessing their suitability before they decide whether to apply for an apprenticeship. This could include information on what else is required to enter the industry such as driver's license, medical tests, drug tests, police check etc. and

- *A Measurement of Desirable Aptitudes and Attitudes* - which can be designed to measure and report on desirable aptitudes and attitudes customised to different industry sectors(e.g. commercial, residential, industrial)

The *'Tool'* will need to adapt and integrate key tools currently in use and should be able to measure a potential candidate's capabilities by:

- Testing skills as they will be applied in the workplace;

- Testing the behaviors and attitudes required in the position; and

- Identifying examples of how applicants have used skills or behaviors in the past**.**

It was also suggested that the *'Tool '*should include an online component to measure and report on desirable aptitudes and attitudes - which should be customised to different sectors of the industry and give consideration to:

- *Measuring the desirable aptitudes and attitudes in a potential candidate* – i.e. through online processes to:
    - Assess potential apprentices against specific position requirements, and core values as described in vacancy descriptions;
    - Evaluate the personal attributes related to work performance, indicating how individuals work with others, approach their tasks, solve problems, manage change and deal with stress;
    - Identify potential apprentices job-related strengths and areas of weakness in relation to vacancy descriptions;
    - Predict job performance by measuring the fit between any vacancy and any candidate; and
    - Undertake an analysis of individual's skills.

- *Allowing Employers to easily compare a potential candidate's profile and personal attributes with those identified as necessary for successful job performance* - which will include mixing and matching from approaches outlined below to meet for unique hiring situation:
    - Aptitude tests;
    - Testing skills as they will be applied in the workplace and expose areas for pre-employment training and support;
    - Using simulations and scenarios to test the behaviours and attitudes that will be required in the workplace;
    - Identifying examples of how applicants have used skills or behaviours in the past; and
    - Using Data obtained from tests and questionnaires and then measured against job descriptions**.**

- *Reporting to Employers* - **i.e. generating reports** (*Vacancy Match Reports*) outlining how closely a potential candidate meets the position requirements including**:**
    - Suitability Reports, based on specific job requirements including essential and desirable traits and traits that could hinder performance for the position;
    - Assessment of Personal Attributes in relation to values, task preferences, personal honesty, work environment preference and personality/ motivation; and
    - Job Fit and Development Reports, analysing how a potential candidate fits a specific role, provides management advice and explains training and development opportunities.

Appropriate Aptitude Tests

There are a number of models of aptitude type tests that were brought up during the consultation process.

The Work Personality Index (WPI)

One example which is used across industry and by a number of Australia's largest employers is the Work Personality Index (WPI). This is a Canadian developed tool which is coordinated in Australia by the Australian Centre of Educational Research (ACER). ACER is an independent, not-for-profit organisation which creates and disseminates knowledge and tools, to improve learning, for the fulfillment of individuals and society. ACER can customise the Work Personality Index to fit with targeted occupations within industries. The Work Personality Index:

- Is an advanced measure of work personality characteristics;

- Offers insight into an individual's typical workplace behavior;

- Provides practical suggestions for improving personal effectiveness; and

- Streamlines the selection of job candidates, and helps guide job interviews.

The WPI provides a valid and dependable measure of personality traits that directly influence a person's work performance and task effectiveness. The WPI measures 17 personality traits that research has shown are related to work performance. These traits indicate how individuals work with others, approach their tasks, solve problems, manage change, and deal with stress.

Teamwork	Concern for Others	Outgoing
Democratic	Attention to Detail	Rule-Following
Dependability	Ambition	Energy
Persistence	Leadership	Innovation
Analytical Thinking	Self-Control	Stress Tolerance
Initiative	Flexibility	

Outlining the person's job-related strengths and identifying areas of weaknesses, the WPI is useful for training and development, personnel selection and team building.

It has been trialed in some other industries very successfully and is seen by many employers in those industries as a critical tool in the staff recruitment process. There will need to be a process of consultation with employers on the actual attribute ratings for the apprentice.

WPI Job Match System - The WPI also has a job matching system which is a convenient and flexible system that also allows customisation of the WPI for different occupations in an organisation or across industry. It allows employers to specify the personality characteristics necessary for effective job performance in designated jobs or for entry into qualifications like apprenticeships. Job Match Reports can then be used by potential applicants to assess how suitable they are for job vacancies and assists employers to assess each candidate's personality traits match with their predetermined criteria. Reports can be made available to potential apprentices and employers after agreement is reached.

Harrison Job Suitability Assessments

Another suggested approach is use of the Harrison Job Suitability Assessments. The assessment is a comprehensive job specific employment test related to attitudes, motivations, work values, engagement factors, interpersonal skills, and retention factors. The assessment formulas are based on 20 years of performance research and can be completely customised according to the job requirements. It can be used for recruitment as well as developing performance, engagement, retention and work satisfaction. It can be customised to measure any system of behavioral competencies providing an invaluable tool for developing or screening for behavioral competencies. A percentage rating is provided linked to occupations.

A number of employment and training agencies use this assessment and a number of organisations including TAFE are considering adopting this approach as part of their standard practices. The costs to the participant are around $30 to $40.

Summary

Very few employers would not benefit from nationally integrated recruitment and selection tools with a strong feeling that many already relied heavily on GTOs to undertake vetting for candidates. There was strong support for a national benchmark recruitment '*tool* 'into the industry that incorporated the following components:

1. *A Self-Assessment Screening Component -* that should be designed and structured to assess a potential candidate's suitability before they decide whether to apply for an apprenticeship.

2. *A component to measure and report on desirable aptitudes and attitudes -* which should be customised to different sectors of the industry.

3. The *RA Tool* to assess an individual's capabilities against identified literacy and numeracy requirements for successfully progressing through the industry qualification.

There was less agreement on whether the *RA* and the complete developed package would be made compulsory so all that entered the industry would need to complete it. Most thought this was a step too far but industry should take the leadership and promote the set of tool to all employers, potential apprentices and RTOs. There was strong view that this was an industry '*tool*' and should be owned and implemented by industry associations, not government or other agencies.

According to the employers consulted, it is imperative that industry promote the package to schools and all other important players in the national training system including the new Apprenticeship Support Services Network. Employers supported this approach and expected this to part of NECA's role in the long-term.

NECA's views and position

NECA is supportive of a national benchmark entry test into the industry. It should comprise a standard online technical test based on the Readiness Assessment test trialed under the Project. NECA will seek support for the national rollout of the test across all relevant industry associations for the industry.

The Readiness Assessment test should have two purposes in identifying and addressing potential barriers to success before a candidate begins their apprenticeship. This includes a Recruitment tool with a specific focus on numeracy and literacy skills, to ensure potential candidates have technical capacity to undertake their training and to assist RTOs in providing assistance to potential barriers to progression identified through readiness indicators.

NECA wished to explore options for the conduct of the test by industry in partnership with other industry associations and industry. This does not preclude an arrangement with E-OZ or any other organisation that can administer the test in a cost effective way (ie costs recovery only). Support for the test must be sought from all major providers into the industry which does not exist at the moment.

NECA supports the introduction of aptitude based tests based on the ACER or Harrison or equivalent models. The actual program should not be mandatory but be promoted as a key aspect of the kit for recruitment into the industry. Costs for the test should be kept to a minimum and be borne by the applicant.

NECA will also develop a list of other important entry requirements required for all the industry including driver's license, drug and alcohol testing, police checks and general medical tests. This will be a guide only and not be listed as mandatory or contain any reference to NECA liability.

An Industry Recruitment Kit once agreed be promoted to all potential apprentices, schools, Australia Support Services providers, RTOs and other key stakeholders.

3. National Apprenticeship Register and Job Matching Processes

The National Apprenticeship Register (NAR)

The *NAR* was established in the Pilot Project to maintain a record of pre-assessed candidates seeking an electrical apprenticeship. This was freely accessible to employers. Once a candidate successfully completed their *RA,* information was forwarded to participating employers to allow them to identify eligible students within a geographical area and apprenticeship candidates to find a suitable employment opportunity. The consultation process has been utilised to gather employers' views:

- On the usefulness of *NAR* in the brokerage of training positions and the capacity of the *NAR* to help them identify eligible students and select suitable apprenticeship candidates;

- Whether selected pre-assessed candidates have proven *'ready'* to be successful in an electrical apprenticeship; and

- On issues of currency and maintenance post project.

Most employers participating in the Pilot were in agreement that the *NAR* provided a renewed focus on - *ensuring a good 'fit' between the potential apprentice, their employer and the industry* - including the training program; the job and the employer. Matching apprentices with an employer was seen as a way of addressing the gap in the current system and a recruitment strategy that had, and will have, benefits for both apprentices and employers.

For those employers participating in the Pilot:

- Some didn't use the *NAR* as they preferred their own recruitment process and utilised their own aptitude test and hands on skills in conjunction with *RA* as part of the application process;

- Some utilised the register initially however, recent attempts identified that the register was out of date which brought up issues of currency and maintenance;

- Some employers wanting to engage apprentices straight from school found no age or additional information was provided. They suggested a short CV for each candidate and a more HR friendly approach would be beneficial;

- There was disappointment that the service had been discontinued; and

- Some found the *NAR* to be lacking detail and suggested it required additional information. If it is to be used as a national system for brokering training places it needs a better medium for distributing information and providing feedback. This included re-examining the data/field requirements to provide better descriptions of the tasks for posted vacancies, including the skills and qualities that individuals require to successfully working within the position.

It was suggested that the *NAR* could be delivered through the operation of a national *Vacancy & Matching Board* where employers could list vacancies and potential apprentices could access through the operation of the *National Benchmark Recruitment 'Tool ' Online* - tailored to industry requirements. This should include guidelines, particularly for smaller business to develop and document vacancies for confirmed apprenticeships - tailored specifically for the business - outlining the range of tasks for the vacancy and the skills and qualities that individuals require to successfully work within the position.

This will include supporting the employer to:

- Confirm apprenticeships and job structure;

- Develop a profile of the skills needed;

- Document vacancies and the competencies needed by successful candidates;

- Establish a clear understanding of the apprenticeships available, employer expectations, relevant tasks and the timing of placements;

- Map the vacancy against skill-sets and competencies to determine *"fits"* within the trade pathway; and

- Identify the attitudes/aptitudes that are critical to success in the positions.

The *Vacancy & Matching Board* should be used to communicate appropriate indicators of readiness to prospective apprentices, assess individual readiness and provide guidance on suitable support pathways based on the individual's skills profile. It should focus on identifying the most appropriate candidates for vacancies by assessing the skills, aptitude and attitude that is suitable to the types of businesses that they would be going into and identifying pre-employment programs to fill identified skills gaps which may be necessary in order to fill vacancies.

The *process* should give the apprentice a clear understanding of what their apprenticeship will entail to help manage their expectations, and ensure that they have the ability to perform the tasks, both on-the-job and in training, with focus on the attitudinal fit between the job role and the potential apprentice. In relation to the long term process around future delivery it was agreed that any *matching process* would be best undertaken by employers directly or industry-based groups that understand the types of attributes that successful apprentices possess. These groups are also best placed to direct apprentices to pre-vocational programs and employability skills development or pre-apprenticeship training program that is recognised and endorsed by industry and focused on basic trade skills development. Some employers felt this service should be part of membership fee as a base level service with additional services being at set fee levels.

A general theme that has emerged from the consultations is that the quality of information available to potential apprentices is inconsistent, patchy and not easily accessible. The peak industry associations manage apprentice career information websites pertaining to their specific industries. However, there is no link between these sites, and current generic sites are not well informed or well-structured to provide information to either potential apprentices or employers. It was suggested that the *NAR* could provide a central point that can provide detailed information on the more general nature of apprenticeships and information to a potential apprentice before they go seeking further industry specific information.

Apprentices and employers need to be able to access accurate, complete and current information about occupations and the industry as well as future career paths stemming from the apprenticeship and this approach could underpin a cohesive approach to the dissemination of industry specific resources and information. This will include greater clarity on groups to be targeted with information specific to their requirements and coordinated approaches for the distribution of information to ensure that accurate and relevant information can be provided directly from the electrotechnology industry to specific target groups.

NECA's views and position

NECA supports the continuation of a national apprenticeship recruitment Register operated by industry.

4. E-Profiling and Profiling Tools

The consultation process has been utilised to gather employers' views on the workplace evidence gathering tool (profiling system). This included addressing employers' views on the following:

- Did the *profiling* system used satisfy the requirements for achievement of the 'on-the-job' component (agreed industry benchmarks are set based on apprentices achieving satisfactory targets using the workplace profiling system);

- Did employers have confidence that the profiling system;

    - Fostered the supply of valid and reliable evidence for reporting against business quality assurance measures/the formal benchmarks/regulatory requirements, and

    - Ensured consistency and quality in training and assessment outcomes;

- Did the online tools allow for the accurate reporting of the tasks apprentices had undertaken in the workplace;

- Did the process adequately inform an RTO that adequate workplace performance had been demonstrated to support a judgement regarding an apprentice's competence in a specified unit of competency;

- The role of the RTO in developing understanding of 'on-the-job' performance that will be monitored using electronic profiling technology - tracking the scope of work undertaken and level of supervision under which it was conducted; and

- Incentives for apprentice/supervisor/employer/RTO to support the use of the profiling system.

General themes emerging from discussions have indicated that:

- Employers generally agreed with the robust collection of on and off-the-job evidence to verify workplace competency (safe and consistent application of workplace skills and attitude) although some were not clear of their role in monitoring an apprentice's on-the-job progression and how to link this to an apprentice's performance;

- There are some significant issues in a few workplaces where there is some misuse of the tool including - signing a set of forms at one time, providing apprentices their access code, getting a range of non-supervisor to mass the forms and not connecting them to the workplace at all;

- There are some excellent examples of best practice in small, medium and large companies particularly on how to link profiling with performance management and off-the-job training with workplace training;

- Some employers raised the issue of red tape and the constant issue of chasing up apprentices for the completed forms. However, even with options presented of fortnightly, monthly or completed unit submission of forms, there was no real move to change the current arrangements;

- Employers saw the primary driver as the apprentice but were concerned some apprentices did not understand how to use the tool, and were not adequately trained in it by the RTO;

- Some RTOs spent designated allocated time on training the apprentice on the profiling tool and it was very clear when this happened. There is provision in the current qualification through a designated unit (CO 20) to undertake this work and it is resourced accordingly. However, it was also obvious that some RTOs did not sufficiently undertake this training for apprentices or it was not provided adequate importance in the early years of the apprenticeship. There was support for a refresher on the profile tool each year;

- There is no support for one particular instrument to be adopted nationally with employers and providers having their particular favourites that they have used for some time. The compulsory use of the E-Profiling tool as was practiced under the Pilot Project was not supported, and in fact was a key factor in some RTOs not participating in the EIAPMS Project;

- They were supportive of *profiling* in approaches that track not only the type and quantity of work the apprentice has undertaken but also the level of supervision provided by the employer;

- Some employers are supportive of the IPad option with some seeking other Android options; and

- Employers were supportive of online profiling tools that allow for the accurate reporting of the tasks apprentices undertake in the workplace and that can eliminate the need for unwieldy and time-consuming paperwork and paper-based logbooks.

For those employers participating in the Pilot:

- Most found the profiling system to be generally user friendly and adequate for the task although for some there appeared to be a lot of task repetition and the sign-off process were more designed for direct indenture not group schemes;

- Most employers were not aware of the numerous reports available and felt that the only professional development around eProfiling was offered by the RTO (which appeared inadequate) and they suggested that refresher training for field officers would be beneficial; and

- In general most indicated that they thought that eProfiling was *"very good"* and were quite happy to utilise the *Application*. Their internal reviews often indicated no problems and an easy system to use.

NECA's views and position

NECA support the operation of compulsory national profiling system that tracks and measures the collected evidence of work performed by an apprentice in the workplace and allows for the accurate reporting of workplace activities. It needs to be linked to the national training package and reflective of the agreed training plan between the employer and the apprentice. The existence of such a system should be mandatory for all electrotechnology apprentices. NECA does not consider that any preference should be provided to any particular tool as long as it is recognised by employers in that particular jurisdiction. It does not support the continuation of the requirement of the e-Profiling tool as a compulsory component of the system as undertaken through the Pilot program.

The administration of these arrangements can be conducted by a third party but must be undertaken on a neutral cost basis (i.e. cost recovery) rather than being used as an income stream for any particular organisation.

It is imperative that all RTOs undertake detailed training of apprentices in profiling in order to ensure all apprentices are very clear on the role, requirements and other factors relating to the timeliness and translation of the profiling instrument into workplace practice and confirmation of work related competencies. This is already required under a set competency at the commencement of training but there should also be refresher sessions at the commencement of the second and third year.

Training and support should be provided to employers, particularly for small and medium size businesses, by a special federal government apprentice supervisor course program to ensure that employers are best placed to understand their reciprocal obligations and how to more effectively integrate the process into their workplace practices and performance arrangements.

5. CBT, CBP and CBWP Issues

Understanding the concepts of Competency-Based Training and Progression

The Consultations have revealed that there needs to be greater clarity and understanding about the distinctive elements that are relevant to an analysis of the *competency-based system*. Under the Pilot Project and more generally the terms are often used interchangeably and often with no regard for what each means and the implications of each. There are also assumptions in the project design that they are a continuum and one will unquestioningly lead as a progression to another. There remains an issue of the understanding of the concepts of competency based training and progression and making distinctions between the:

- Use of the term **competency-based progression (CBP**) as the generic or overarching term used to describe the practice model that replaces the *'time-served'* notion;

- The term **competency-based training** which is used to characterise those behaviors and procedures associated with the *'act of training'* and require the inclusion of the following features:

  - Performance criteria that include measures of proficiency;

  - The need for formal endorsement of the employer in the competency assessment process; role of formal endorsement;

  - Training plans that are developed between the RTO, the employer and the apprentice; the recognition of *Benchmarks* as agreed to by the Industry;

  - Entry-level skills assessment prior to the training plan being entered into; and

  - Tracking the work-based activities of apprentices – both on and off the job, with the capacity to capture profiling over the course of the training, and measure an apprentice's progression towards each *Benchmark.*

- Competency based training progression which must be distinguished from **competency-based wage progression (CBWP)**. *CBWP* means that upon the acquisition of the competencies associated with a particular stage of the apprenticeship, the apprentice is entitled to be paid the minimum wage rate associated with the next stage. The term **competency-based wage progression** will be applied specifically to arrangements where competency-based training and progression are embedded in workplace processes, in a way that permits access to wage increases as skill milestones (*Benchmarks*) are achieved, assessed and verified; and

- **CBWP** which should also be distinguished from **competency based completion**. The system for regulation of apprenticeships has traditionally allowed for earlier completion. The ability to complete an apprenticeship early, where all the necessary competencies have been achieved is now more widespread and variation in *Award*s provide for it. Within this context the apprenticeship is completed in a shorter period when:

  - The qualification specified in the training agreement is successfully completed;

  - The apprentice has the necessary practical experience to achieve competency in the skills covered by the training plan, provided that the determination as to whether this condition has been met must be by agreement between the RTO, the employer and the apprentice and where there is a disagreement concerning this matter the matter may be referred to the relevant State/Territory apprenticeship authority for determination; and

  - The requirements of the relevant State/Territory apprenticeship authority are met.

Employer Support for Competency-Based Training and Progression

There was no doubt there was support for *competency based training* as required by the current national training system, particularly for the off-the-job training component. The industry is very unusual as all those involved have done an apprenticeship and are familiar with the process. However, what this actually means in practice is a different matter and the real implications of *CBP* are not fully understood.

A number of employers expressed concerns in moving from the current time-based apprenticeship model to that of a CBWP model including:

- An impact of the cost of apprentices if fast tracking occurs;

- The linking of structured off-the-job training to the practical work-based experience gained by apprentices and difficulties in aligning off-job and on-job learning and experiences;

- RTO programming not sufficiently flexible and the traditional RTO practice of timetabling off-the-job training without reference to the apprentice's progress at work. This criticism was often aimed by employers at public RTOs;

- The entrenched attitudes of some employers;

- The perception in some quarters that CBP and completion means rushing apprentices through their training;

- Employer push-back re wages and their investment;

- The age of the apprentices and maturity identified as an issue for advancement;

- Concerns that there really isn't CBP as there are very limited ways to keep an apprentice back if they have not completed competencies adequately or been able to use them in workplace settings;

- The notion of 'acceleration' – *"not in my day…"*

- Realities of workplaces and learning on-the-job; and

- Still some employers who view apprentice training as the sole responsibility of the RTO/GTO.

There were also different industry views on the decision by Fair Work Australia in late 2013 and its actual impact on *CBWP*. There was concern over *"who is driving this"* and *"which organisations support CBWP?"*

Master Electricians were not supportive of any introduction of the Benchmarking system or CBWP. There has been discussion on this matter with some state branches of the Electrical Trades Union and there has only been limited support for CBWP and any fast tracking.

In the context of *CBP* arrangements and associated wage implications and processes**,** general themes emerging from the consultations have indicated that:

- A significant number of employers did not support CBP wage progression. They generally supported the annual progression of apprentices or duration of 3.5 to 4 years. Some commented that if CBP wage progression was forced on the industry then it may lead to significantly fewer apprentice commencements;

- There was significant concern on the assessment processes and employer involvement to ensure competencies can be applied in the workplace thereby justifying the commensurate pay increase;

- In the very few situations where CBWP was trialed, the employers reported they were trying to move away from it as they felt that the system was open to abuse with competencies signed off just to advance a pay level;

- Some employers felt like the Pilot Project had been thrust at them with no real induction or guidance and commented that it had not had any impact on the way that they conducted their business and had made no change to apprentice progression;

- Employers considered that the current system was satisfactory and why was all these systems being put in place anyway;

- Employers were concerned that the introduction of CBWP would lead to conflict in the workplace or allow for unions to enter the workplace if there was a dispute; and

- A small number of employers saw some merit in Benchmark Assessments for progression from 3rd to 4th year however they felt that this must have employer sign off and needed to be agreed locally.

There was a small group that recognised some potential benefits for employers including*:*

- An increased pool of qualified tradespersons;

- More on-the-job training and associated productivity gains;

- Effective response to the need to develop specialist skill sets levels; and

- Increased morale of employees – apprentices work at a higher level and qualify more quickly and have better career path options.

However, even they were concerned with the implementation issues outlined above.

The Application of the Industry Agreed Benchmarks

There was a general understanding that through the *CBP* model the qualification will be divided into four training phases based on the establishment of *industry benchmarks* for both on and off-the-job elements. The *Industry Benchmark*s were established by E-OZ to strengthen the electrical apprenticeship model and to provide a robust framework of progression from one phase to another phase. The intention was to ensure apprentices had access to a flexible, competency-based system, providing confidence for all users.

Through the Pilot Project, employers relied heavily on the support from Mentor/Advisors to support *competency based progression* - by ensuring apprentices demonstrated the critical skills and knowledge at the end of each phase of training and that this was the mechanism to be used for apprentice progression to the next phase of training and used to trigger the next increment level of pay. While they existed and funded, Mentor/Advisors had a significant role in:

- Tracking the progress of each individual apprentice against the electrical trade qualification;

- In monitoring an apprentice's on-the-job progression; and

- Supporting apprentices to move from one phase of training to the next including the combination of units, e Profiling markers and online assessments to help ensure all apprentices are truly competent before progressing them through the phases.

Feedback from employers is that post Pilot they will need support to understand how:

- The *Benchmarks* reflect workplace performance and capabilities of the apprentice at each stage of training;

- The *Benchmarks* provide a common reference point for describing and discussing workplace performance at each stage of training and how the apprentice has applied their learning and skills in the workplace, and in their opinion about their ability to do the job;

- To utilise a *Profiling System* - given on-the-job performance will be monitored using electronic profiling technology, an explanation of their role in tracking the scope of work undertaken and level of supervision under which it was conducted. Supporting apprentices to complete the requirements of their current stage of training (including both on and off-the-job elements) and verification through the robust collection of on and off-the-job evidence;

- Achievement of each *progression point* will be confirmed and how this ensures a nationally consistent standard to provide confidence for training and pay progression. This will need to address significant concerns on the assessment processes and employer involvement to ensure competencies can be applied in the workplace thereby justifying the commensurate pay increase;

- Requirements will be formally communicated through the Training Plan clearly identifying the progression requirements to the parties to the Contract of Training; and

- This will improve the apprentice retention of the skills and knowledge identified by the Essential Performance Capabilities for electrical licensing.

Given the uncertainty on the availability of Mentor/Advisors post Pilot Project to provide advice and support to apprentices and to help guide them towards progression and completion, there needs to be clarification on employer roles and responsibilities in facilitating *CBWP* with reference to the industry *benchmark* assessment process, benchmarking and other important stages required to complete satisfactory progression.

This needs to include greater employer understanding of:

- *The purpose of the Industry Benchmarks* – as a quality assurance system to ensure apprentices are competent and safe to advance to the next stage of training and they have retained the relevant skills and knowledge in each phase. However, care has also been taken in the development process by employer representatives that the process does not lead to an "over assessment" of apprentices and the need to be clear on the rationale for additional red tape;

- *The structure of the Industry Benchmarks*;

- *How apprentices progress* - the process of how an apprentice moves from one phase to the next including:

    - The use of the *Industry Progression Benchmark Assessment (IPBA)* – and how apprentices undertake the end of phase revision unit plus the *IPBA;*

    - Have apprentices satisfied the on-the-job (relevant work experience) and off-the-job (trade training) requirements before apprentices can sit an *IPBA;*

- How areas of improvement can be identified to be able to tackle the subsequent phase of training;

- Understanding that when apprentices sit the *IPBA* that it is a knowledge test and a skills test with a qualified assessor and that the tests are mapped to the 55 Essential Performance Capabilities which have been mapped to the core competency standard units of the electrical license qualification; and

- Their role in the process verifying information, reviewing and confirming Profiling and academic results, and preparing remedial plans if required.

- *The Benchmark Tests:*

- How the apprentice will complete the tests online which are automatically marked and results are emailed to the RTO; and

- How the *Benchmark* Skills Test will be accessed by the assessor prior to the apprentice undertaking the test to prepare the practical facilities in the training facility and how the *Skills Test* results are uploaded on the LMS by the Assessor.

There has been some discussion regarding the overall responsibility of managing and oversight for the *Benchmark* process. It has been suggested by some that the electrical regulators may be in the best position to undertake this role but at this stage there is no agreement for them to undertake this function. Currently, in Victoria, the regulator has responsibility for the conduct of the Capstone tests but in other states this rests with the RTOs. There has not been any real interest from other states to undertake this function let alone additional responsibilities connected to the *Benchmark* process. It also leaves the issue of costs and who pays unclear.

NECA participation in the *Benchmark* process has only been on a technical basis rather than an approving authority. As part of this process, E-OZ presented the system for the first time to NECA at the Education and Training Advisory Group on 5 May 2015.

It was also evident that the Electrical Trades Union viewed all the elements of the Project as critical to any introduction of *CBWP* in the medium term and the additional requirement that E-OZ as an independent body not aligned to any employer body, is essential to administer any arrangement. The costs of administering this type of arrangement subsidised by government would be expensive, particularly if the Mentor/Advisor ratio of 50 apprentices was to apply across all electrotechnology apprentices in Australia. It is unlikely that the government would allocate sufficient funds for an ongoing operation for the industry and currently no program exists for this type of initiative at a national level.

NECA's views and position

NECA supports the application of competency based training and the importance of an integrated workplace and off–the-job validation of skills and competencies.

NECA does not support the implementation of *Benchmarks* for the blanket application of competency based wage progression.

NECA supports the conduct of a technical theory and practical Capstone test at the completion of the Certificate III in Electrotechnology.

NECA considers that the introduction of prescribed benchmark assessments conducted at designated intervals during the apprenticeship by an outside party to the employer and RTO is an unnecessary, administratively burdensome new process that will not provide any added value to the existing arrangement. Quality conduct of on and off- the-job training through the apprenticeship, regular weekly profiling completion and lodgment which is supported by RTO training for apprentices and employers, increased employer confidence and understanding of their relationship with RTOs, and the Capstone test provide excellent safeguards for quality outcomes.

Employers are becoming increasingly concerned over the costs of apprenticeships including increases in student fees, tool allowances, other workplace allowances, wages (especially those for adult apprentices), and other market factors all combine to make employers wary of the introduction of any other processes that add to costs need to pass a clear cost benefit test.

6. CBP Information Kit

One of the outcomes of the review of the EIAPMS project is the development of an information kit on *CBP* and associated Benchmarking processes for employers, apprentices and RTOs. There is no doubt there was a need for a process to increase employer understanding/use of *CBP* and the need for a broader communication strategy - in a simple way for the target audiences. Based on the consultations, information gaps were identified in the following areas in the context of the Pilot Project:

- *Purpose of CBP and how it will:*
    - Allow apprentices to progress based on the achievement of quality standards set by the industry;
    - Provide greater flexibility to training organisations and employers to facilitate training;
    - Enhance apprentice retention of skills and knowledge for electrical licensing; and
    - Provide a consistent national approach to the identification of the workplace performance requirements in diverse contexts;

- *The use of Industry Benchmark and the Benchmarking Process including:*
    - How they provide a common reference point for describing and discussing workplace performance;
    - How the Progression *Benchmarks* describe four levels of performance**,** taking into account the factors that influence an apprentice's workplace performance i.e. the degree and nature of support available/required, the familiarity with the context they are working in and the complexity of the task to be completed;
    - How the *Industry Benchmarks* can be incorporated in the Training Plan Process clearly identifying the progression requirements to the parties to the Contract of Training; and
    - Processes for employer confirmation on *Benchmark* completion.

- *Monitoring Progression* – how to track the progress of each individual apprentice against the electrical trade qualification including the active role of employers in monitoring an apprentice's on-the-job progression and supporting apprentices to move from one phase of training to the next including, the combination of units, eProfiling markers and online assessments to help ensure all apprentices are truly competent before progressing them through phases. This will include their role in:
    - Supporting apprentices to complete the requirements of their current stage of training (including both on and off-the-job elements) and verification through the robust collection of on and off-the-job evidence;
    - The use of the national online '*Industry Progression Benchmark Assessments'* and how this will ensure that apprentices around the country are performing at the same standard;
    - Getting apprentices to sit the *Industry Progression Benchmark Assessment (IPBA);*
    - Working with the RTO (reviewing and confirming e-Profiling and academic results);
    - Administration of *IPBA* e.g. IPBA set up on LMS;
    - Discussing *IPBA* results with apprentice, RTO and Employer; and
    - Developing remedial programs for unsuccessful *IPBA* Results.

Given the Benchmarking system and *CBWP* issues did not have support from employers and other key stakeholders it was suggested that there are a number of important issues that apprentices and employers need information on, including information to address:

- Significant misunderstandings on CBP arrangements;
- Misunderstandings of the terms CBT, CBP and CBWP;
- Lack of practical knowledge of the profiling system, support arrangements and responsibilities of all parties;
- The importance of adequate and skilled supervisors, particularly in small firms;
- Key messages for employers on their ability to demand particular services and standards from RTOs; and
- Key messages for apprentices on their ownership and role in the profiling system

Employers and apprentices were of the strong view that they did not want large booklets or other large information kits but preferred simple fact/information sheets. As part of this process, NECA has appointed *A Punch of Light,* a specialist marketing and event management company, which is not part of the training industry. It was important to secure a company with no previous history with CBP issues in order to get an alternative *"fools guide"* to the identified issues. It was decided by NECA that the production of materials would be directly related to the consultations and the issues have been canvassed with employers, apprentices and RTOs as part of that process.

NECA's views and position

NECA considers that some useful information targeted at employers and apprentices on aspects of the apprenticeship system would be useful. These should cover issues such as the profiling, supervisor issues with apprentices, recruitment kit factors, employer ability to influence RTOs and other workplace issues. Material should be available online and be short and to the point.

7. Issues with Up-Front Training and Ongoing Training Arrangements

The use of Pre-Apprenticeship programs

Pre-Apprenticeship programs were viewed by most employers as an important preparation for an apprenticeship. Although there has not been any substantive work on quantifying their impact on the initial productivity of those that enter an apprenticeship after completing a pre-apprenticeship, or other preparatory study or work experience, common themes that emerged from the consultations were that pre-apprenticeships had the capacity to provide potential apprentices with a better understanding of what the apprenticeship in the industry entailed.

The consultations very clearly identified that employers were very much in favor of pre-apprenticeships and that those who undertake them generally like them. Most regarded pre-apprenticeships as having several purposes including:

- Providing work-related skills suitable for employment as an apprentice;
- Assisting students with inadequate educational preparation to reach a level suitable for apprentices;
- Ensuring apprentices' expectations about working in the trade matched the reality; and
- Providing a filtering mechanism for employers to reduce attrition from apprenticeships.

The consultations found pre-apprenticeships were strongly established in the electrotechnology trades although the funding of them remains an issue in many states. The lack of a national approach is of great concern that needs to be addressed.

Some Pilot Project participants had undertaken pre apprenticeships with employers having a common view on their use, including:

- A process for weeding out unsuitable candidates and hence pre-apprenticeships are likely to improve retention;
- Seeing them as a useful way into an apprenticeship;
- Those who undertake pre-apprenticeships are more engaged with the occupation and are more likely to have plans for higher-level training after they complete their apprenticeships; and
- Pre-apprenticeships are seen as both getting students *'work ready'* and about engagement with the trade.

Intensive forms of up-front training

Employers through the consultation process were generally positive with the idea of incorporating innovative up-front training options and intensive forms of off-the-job-delivery that gave apprentices, and their employers, the option to concentrate a significant amount of the formal training component at the beginning or before the apprenticeship commences. This was seen as an approach to getting potential applicants *'work ready'* and more productive earlier to meet employer needs for apprentices who are more immediately useful in the workplace. Intensive front-end loading of the initial training can be used in prerequisites and areas of underpinning knowledge that can take the 'unskilled entrant' to a skill level where they are more useful and productive upon employment. However, most organisations wanted to ensure that these competencies needed to be verified in the workplace through discussions with employers, apprentices and the RTOs.

Block release and upfront training has been tried with some employers as a way to lessen costs and increase the productive time an apprentice has in the workplace. It is important to examine these pathways and determine their applicability to a wider range of employers. Employers generally felt that up-front training should be publicly funded with a commitment from the employer to engage the apprentice once intensive up-front training is completed.

There continues to be a debate over the extent of up front training and one employer who favored up front training was told that that type of arrangement did not fit with the pilot and CBP arrangements underpinning the Project. This is of great concern when an employer is dictated to by a training intermediary organisation and steps should be taken to ensure this does not reoccur. However, all employers agreed that it was important to validate all skills and competencies in the workplace in a timely way and this is a cornerstone of the system.

NECA's views and position

NECA is strongly supportive of pre-apprenticeship programs and recommends that a national funding approach be adopted by the federal, state and territory governments. It is of great concern that the funding support for these programs has been reduced or abolished in some jurisdictions.

NECA considers that the funding arrangements for pre-apprenticeship programs should be contestable with industry encouraged to compete with a focus on achieving employment outcomes.

NECA considers that the training mix, particularly up front off-the-job training, should be a matter for employers and their workplace arrangements rather than the impost of arbitrary restrictions by intermediary organisations. However, any off-the-job training needs to be validated in the workplace.

8. Makeup of the current Electrotechnology Qualification

Employers were generally not familiar with the detail around the Industry Training Package and uncertain about the makeup of the current Electrotechnology Certificate III qualification. The consultations indicated a strong commitment to training with support for training and development evident across most employers consulted. Many reported high levels of structured training (where training activities have a specified content or pre-determined plan). This is reflective of the specialist nature of technical skills and qualifications required of the industry and high safety standards required to work in the electrical industry. Many of the electrical contractors have been brought up in a traditional trade-based environment where there has been an accepted industry structure over many years.

The training pathways currently available in the industry are largely appropriate and the electrotechnology industry commitment to a traditional trades training level at AQF 3 is widely supported. A number of employers did bring up the issue of increasing specialisation of work and how that is placing pressure on a broad based whole of industry skills learning pathway. Many traditional employers are now facing a number of workforce challenges to add to the many others the industry is experiencing. Within this context many employers are unclear how to influence their training provider and generally feel that the Electrotechnology Training Package is delivered in a compulsory manner and sequence and that skills training for the trade may have become too prescriptive. Typically, these employers, having hired an apprentice, rely heavily on the nominated RTO and/or GTO to guide them through the process of engaging the apprentice and developing appropriate training programs based on the selection of a set of core and elective competencies. This process is in part failing employers because little time has been spent on seeking to match an individual business to the set of competencies best suited to its needs and there is not enough emphasis on the engagement of an individual employer by the RTO. There needs to be a process undertaken where employers are more effectively engaged in the development of a training package with the competencies and skills for today's workplace, that are based on job profiles rather than training industry paradigms and frameworks.

There is also a need to support employers in identifying apprentice training, and electing a set of competencies that best suit their business needs and the needs of their apprentices. Properly planned training programs are essential if businesses are to gain the most advantage from them. This was based on employer feedback where the following issues were raised:

- More flexible training and creative pathways were needed to meet employer needs and the nature of contracting work;

- The training plan is often in a lock step pattern which does not relate to the actual work performed by apprentices, particularly in years one and two; and

- Greater links were required between structured off-the-job training to the practical work-based experience gained by apprentices in the workplace.

This was seen as particularly important in light of the concern of a number of employers, particularly in the domestic and industrial sectors that, in many instances, over a quarter of the required competencies cannot be practiced in the workplace in some enterprises which is a fundamental part of the competency based training system. There were some cases where other non-contractor employers have an arrangement with electrical contractors to work and do the on-the-job component with them in order to acquire adequate skills on-the-job. While the issue has existed for some time, it is evident that the situation is much more serious and applies to a considerable number of employers particularly in many instances where the employer wants to retain their worker and not outsource them to other employers.

There was also a view raised by some of the need to address how a different approach to training and skills acquisition can be part of the industry's development of training programs that are tailored to the needs of modern businesses. The establishment of *Certificate II training within the Certificate III* was considered by some employers as an aspect of the design of apprenticeships to enhance flexibility. This moves apprenticeships away from a '*one size fits all'* approach that has been dominant in the traditional apprenticeship.

The Certificate II component will allow students with different levels of talent and motivation to exit with an industry qualification that allows them to complete essential and important roles in the workplace. It also provides employers with what they need i.e. skilled workers who are willing to do repetitive roles that those fully qualified electricians find to be an underutilisation of their knowledge and skills. The more repetitive work will be completed by individuals trained only to the level of Certificate II, with appropriate workplace supervision, while more talented and ambitious individuals complete a Certificate III, which opens the door to more advanced technical work, as well as career paths into other roles in the industry. These roles are seen to be a response to the compartmentalising of the qualification to better meet current skill deficits, as well as longer-term trends in the industry. The trend to incorporate Certificate II qualifications was seen by some to be adding to a deskilling of the trade and generally not supported by the majority.

However, the vast majority of employers, NECA and other employment and training providers and NECA Boards and employees consider the Certificate III in Electroechnology to be the main entry point into the industry and of critical importance to the ongoing basic skill requirements and future of the industry.

There was also a concern expressed on the need for assurance that people applying for an electrician licence satisfy requirements for licensing. A set of 55 *Essential Performance Capabilities* that cover the scope of electrical work have been agreed, and these need to be covered during training and assessment for an appropriate national training package qualification. There was a general understanding for the need of training for a prospective electrician to include the critical set of the 55 *Essential Performance Capabilities* and with the industry approved final *'capstone'* assessment covering 31 critical items of the 55 Essential Performance Capabilities to be conducted by RTOs as part of the quality assurance process. This requires RTOs to conduct the approved capstone assessment after the completion of all other assessment requirements of the Certificate III Electrician qualification to provide assurance to electrical regulatory authorities of the quality of the candidate presenting for an electrician's licence. The capstone test requires that a learner undertake a 6-8 hour test comprised of 70% practical and 30% written. There were concerns that current indications that show there is a significant failure rate, with a 28% pass rate at the first attempt with 50% of apprentices requiring a fourth attempt when regulators administer the arrangement in Victoria. Nationally the pass rate is 40%. There was also an indication that some of the competencies tested were not able to be applied in particular workplaces.

A very small number of employers expressed the need to consider *'mini-capstones'* aligned to the *Industry Benchmarks* with a final test at the end as long as they did not have to pay for the additional regulation.

It was generally felt that the re-examination of the Certificate III Electrotechnology would be of benefit, particularly in the context of:

- Better qualified and responsive electricians;
- Competent electricians who can:
  - Carry out electrical work safely;
  - Ensure electrical systems worked on are safe to use;
  - Ensure measures for protection against faults are in place and operate as intended; and
  - Select appropriately rated equipment and cables.
- Increased recognition of the Certificate III qualification and related licence;
- Increased portability; and
- Increased acceptability by employers and employees.

NECA's views and position

NECA recommends the re-examination of the Certificate III Electrotechnology qualification to examine the reality of actual workplace validation of competencies across each of the industry sectors (domestic, commercial and industrial) and ways to overcome this. This needs to take account of the various requirements of regulators.

9. Blended Learning

The employer relationship with an RTO and the amount of time an apprentice spends in the workplace as opposed to being with the training provider was also identified as an issue through the consultation process. Nearly a third of electrical contracting businesses consulted are dissatisfied with current training delivery and of those the majority advocated improvement in flexible and blended training delivery and communication. They reported a need for more flexible and creative approaches to timetabling, blocking and pedagogy with a higher level of integration between work and training. This is an important development as many employers have reported in the past that they were concerned at the delivery of training through blended learning (i.e. a combination of learning on-the-job, off-the-job and online). No employer supports the delivery of training fully online.

Key areas for improvement in apprenticeship training that electrical contracting organisations have identified included:

- Timing of Apprenticeship Blocks;

- Training Delivery e.g. day release, flexible training;

- Advice and information on training support options;

- Communication from training provider; and

- Making greater use of 'downtime' of apprentices to deliver 'block training'.

There has been some evidence of the introduction of blended learning delivery by some training providers and out-of-hours off-the-job training which provided more flexible opportunities some general themes that emerged from the consultations included:

- A mixture of upfront training and block release were utilised across some employers with no noticeable difference from normal arrangements;

- The introduction of blended learning and flexible opportunities to complete the apprenticeship is not wholly understood by employers; and

- In relation to the relevance of developed online and other training materials there generally was very little employer knowledge of the program or available resources. For those employers participating in the Pilot:

  - A few had had no contact from the RTO and had no exposure to the LMS; and

  - Generally there was no appetite for the LMS resources. The majority of employers felt that delivery resources were the responsibility of the RTO as part of their delivery responsibility and compliance, not that of the ISC. They also felt public money would be better served providing support services to employers.

There was also some interest in apprentices doing catch-up work with RTOs at night or on their RDOs, particularly if they had fallen behind. This would be more accessible if they could do some of this online although it was considered that the best use of online learning is the reinforcement not replacement of other learning. It was also noted by some employers and industry spokespeople that it is important for deliverers that online learning does not suit all participants, even as a component of the llearning delivery arrangement.

NECA's views and position

NECA supports blended learning but is conscious of the inability of some learners to cope with some aspects of online learning. Blended learning is the use of classroom, workplace and online learning delivery.
The best use of online learning is the reinforcement not replacement of other learning.
All products developed under the project should be available to all RTOs and industry.

10. Provisions and Support for Apprentices and Employers - post June 2015

A key feature of the Pilot Project has been the use of Mentor/Advisors to provide advice and support to apprentices and employers - particularly to help guide them towards progression and completion. They have generally provided the technical expertise needed and the advisory skills (work or personal) used to work with apprentices and their employer to assist and provide the right level of guidance where needed and keep them on track. General consensus was that the engagement of the Mentor/Advisor had provided assistance with getting their apprentices on the road, liaising with the RTOs and assisting them with the often tedious process of employing an apprentice and the associated paperwork. The majority of employers strongly supported the use of Mentor/Advisors and felt that they were a valuable resource and should be continued. General consensus was that the removal of the service will have a serious impact on their apprentices e.g. *"the mentor support we have received has been excellent and that the mentors are a critical service".*

A critical factor in the employment of the Mentors was their experience in the industry as the overwhelming majority of the NECA Mentors were licensed electricians. There is a definite view that the arrangements would have been markedly improved if the contractual arrangement was direct with the department like other associations.

For those employers participating in the Pilot there was strong support for the use of industry based Mentor/Advisors and added that it had taken some of the pressure off the employer in their efforts to meet *Benchmark Progression Points* through their role in:

- Profiling - monitoring progression;

- On and off-the-job training progression (identification of unbalanced outcomes, the balance of progress between on and off the job); and

- Identifying potential barriers to progression identified through readiness indicators.

Some employers felt that the Mentor/Advisors were not as active with the group scheme apprentices and more of a benefit to direct indenture employers through the provision of pastoral care, support and supervision to the apprentices. Some employers also indicated that there should be less focus on administrative functions during Mentor/Advisors visits and more focus on the apprentice's performance and progression. Whilst they supported the role of the Mentor/Advisors they would like this to be a more technical role.

Most employers further commented that if the Mentor/Advisor support service was discontinued there should be a greater focus on supervisors training. Possible supervision units of competency should be developed and customised for electrical employers and supervisors of apprentices to provide training and advice on pastoral care, support and apprentice supervision. They felt the introduction of a supervisor's course would be highly beneficial to industry i.e. a national standard including hands on supervision, legal obligations, pastoral care, success stories and handbooks with FAQ's. The training program should also focus on the competence required by supervision staff to contribute to the assessment process.

It should provide the skills and knowledge required to understanding the four stages of the *Industry Progression Benchmarks* and how apprentices are able to apply their knowledge and skills to successfully complete work activities including:

- Approaches to assessment that covers the clustering of units that focus on the assessment of a 'whole-of-job' role that integrates the assessment of the application of knowledge, technical skills, problem solving and demonstration of attitudes to the level of performance required to do them satisfactorily at work; and

- Undertaking judgements of the apprentice's progress against the key progression points, considering evidence/advice on how the apprentice has applied their learning and skills in the workplace, and their ability to do the job.

The training program should also focus on the more *'hands on'* teaching, training, mentoring and monitoring role of employers who supervise apprentices on a daily basis. It should provide an important formal training experience for the many employees who supervise apprentices on a daily basis but do not have qualifications/skills. The program will need to enhance the coaching and mentoring role of supervisors and should include the efforts they make to motivate apprentices, teach them about the work, develop their skills and provide them with feedback and recognise their achievements. Knowing how and when to coach

(and when to use other tools, like mentoring) was identified as an essential skill that would benefit both the supervisor and the apprentice. The program should also provide the skills and knowledge to effectively communicate and deliver training instruction to apprentices or groups of apprentices in the workplace. This will include providing an understanding of training instruction and facilitating individual and work-based learning.

Employers and apprentices were very concerned over "*what happens on 1 July 2015?*" At this stage this issue is very unclear and must be resolved urgently. There was support for the extension of the national Mentor Program through NECA but with the introduction of the new Apprenticeship Support Services Network arrangements there is a clear expectation that the new providers will engage licensed electricians to service the industry along the lines of the existing Mentoring program.

NECA's views and position

NECA advocates to government that all new Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers have a developed plan on how to meet the needs of existing apprentices and employers that participated under the pilot project and have a strategy to address in- training support for the electrotechnology industry. These approaches and strategies should be made public and publically accountable to industry.
NECA should develop a specialised program for supervisors of apprentices as a recognised skills set under the current Training Package and this should be implemented across Australia with public funding support. This would need to cover relevant and contemporary skills to fulfil the training, work experience and supervision elements of the apprenticeship and provide a sound understanding of employer obligations and responsibilities

11. Other Project Issues and Outcomes that impact on Employers

A significant number of other issues were raised by employers consulted including:

- *Cost of Apprenticeships* is getting far too high and is already impacting on numbers employed. This is particularly when other costs associated with training under awards or Enterprise Based Agreements need to be paid by employers. These include training fees which have risen considerably in recent years and are expected to continue to do so, and tool allowances that now have to be paid due to the abolition of commonwealth support in this area. Options suggested recommended changes to the new Loan entitlement to include a reference to tools not required to be paid if an apprentice completes their apprenticeship and assistance with training fees through tax deductions;

- Mature Aged apprentice numbers have fallen substantially in 2015 with the employers consulted with intakes usually being around a quarter or more of intakes per year which have now fallen to zero or less than five per cent. This is directly due to costs and impacts of the recent Fair Work Australia decision. There is no doubt that additional commonwealth support is required to address this issue;

- Need for the development of a short course skills set for Supervisors of Apprentices which covers many of the issues raised in this report;

- Introduction of hand skills training in schools;

- The importance on literacy and numeracy levels being assessed for all apprentices and adequately incorporated into funding;

- An investigation into the standard of RTOs for the industry; and

- Introduction of more RTO competition in some markets (e.g. ACT and Northern Territory).

NECA's views and position

NECA considers there should be separate funding for literacy and numeracy for apprentices that have been identified through the recruitment process, including the Readiness Assessment test, as requiring additional support during their apprenticeship. This should include a coordinated National – State/Territory approach.

NECA considers urgent action is required to address the issue of the unsustainability of adult apprentices and additional support for employers to offset costs specifically for those aged between 21 and 25.

NECA considers urgent action is required to examine better incentives for all apprentices to meet the rising costs (i.e. costs of tools, tuition fees).

Schools should be encouraged to develop hand skills courses for all potential applicants considering a trade.

NECA supports the operation of a national competitive training market comprising public and private RTOs regulated by one national VET regulator. This should be a condition of the new Commonwealth and State Training Partnership agreement.

Attachment 1

Organisations consulted in-depth on Project (some were consulted on a number of occasions and across sites within a state or territories)

Business/Employer Consulted	Business/Employer Consulted
A. S. Farr Electrical (Tasmania)	Canberra Connections (ACT)
ABF Communications (Victoria)	Canberra Electrics (ACT)
AC Electrical (NSW)	Canberra Institute of Technology (ACT)
AC Electrics NSW Pty Ltd (NSW)	Canberra Institute of Technology (ACT)
Access Solutions (Tasmania) Pty Ltd (Tasmania)	Carrier Electrical Services Pty Ltd (NSW)
ACDC (ACT) Pty Ltd (ACT)	Carringtons Electrical (NSW)
Ackerman Electrical Australia Pty Ltd (Queensland)	Caslec Electrical & Data (NSW)
Airmaster Air Conditioning Ltd (Victoria)	Canberra Connections (ACT)
AJ & DM White (NSW)	Casper Electrics (ACT)
All Things Electrical Central Coast (NSW)	CGG Electrics (Victoria)
AC Electrical (NSW)	Charles Darwin University (NT)
AMPT Electrics (Victoria)	Chatfield Ozcool (Victoria)
Anthony Damen Electrical (Tasmania)	City Facilities Management (Victoria) (twice)
A-Phase Electrical (Victoria)	Click Control Systems (Victoria)
Appselec Pty Ltd (Victoria)	Clipsal Schneider (NSW)
ARA Electrical Engineering (ARA) (NSW)	CNK Electrics (ACT)
Arrow Electrical (NSW)	CNW Electrical) (Tasmania)
ATD Electrical (NSW)	Colbros Electrical Contracting (NSW)
Auslec (Tasmania)	College of Electrical Training (Perth)
Australian Council for Private Education and Training (national)	Complete Electrical (Victoria)
Balakar Pty Ltd (NSW)	Complete Fire, Electrical & Security Pty Ltd (NSW)
Barrie Laing Electrical (NSW)	Connections Pty Ltd (Victoria)
Barters Electrical (ACT)	Contact Electrical (Tasmania)
Baylec (Queensland)	Contact Group (Tasmania)
Beno's Electrical Pty Ltd (Queensland)	CVGT Australia (Victoria)
BGT Electrical (Victoria)	D & M Electrical Communications (NSW)
Bill Charnock Electrical (Victoria)	David Jones Electricians (NSW)
Blue Star Pacific (Queensland)	David Morey Electrical (NSW)
Bluey's Electrical (Queensland)	DDP Electrical Services Pty Ltd (NSW)
BMF Electrical (ACT)	Degree C (Tasmania)
Bollinger and Co (WA)	Delta Elcom (NSW)
Bottega Electrical (Victoria)	Delta Electrics (Northern Territory)
Braaap Pty Ltd (Tasmania)	Department of Education and Training (National)
Breakwell Pty Ltd (Victoria)	Des Mullins Electrical (NSW)
Bretco Electric (NSW)	Department of Employment (National)
Cables Plus Tas Pty Ltd (Tasmania)	Dotcommz Pty Ltd (Queensland)

Business/Employer Consulted
East Caost Apprentcieschips (Queensland)
Edward Stoner Electrical (Tasmania)
Electrical Group Training (Perth)
Electrical Design and Construct Pty Ltd (Victoria)
Electrical Safety Services NSW Pty Ltd (NSW)
Electrical Trade Services Pty Ltd (NSW)
Electrical Trade Union (National)
Electrogroup (ACT)
Electro Power Equipment (NSW)
Electromaster Holdings (NSW) Pty Ltd (NSW)
Elite Electrical Group
Elite Electrical Group (NSW)
Environment and Planning Dept (ACT)
Eris McCarthy Pty Ltd (NSW)
FCOM Electrical (Queensland)
Fredon Industries (NSW)
Fredon Industries (Queensland)
Frontline Electrical (Tasmania)
FTEC Qld (Queensland)
Fusion Electrical (Tasmania)
Gekko Pty Ltd (Victoria)
Gordyn & Palmer (Victoria)
Great Southern Electrical (NSW)
Haymans Cairns (Queensland)
Heerey Electrical Pty Ltd (Tasmania)
Heyday 5 (National) (twice)
Intravision Pty Ltd (ACT)
Jennings Electrical (Queensland)
JHE Electrical (NSW)
JLC Electrical (ACT)
Jodegan Pty Ltd (NSW)
John Goss (Queensland)
John Taylor Electrics (Victoria)
JRC Electrical Services (NSW)
KC & AM Edwards (NSW)
Keemin (Victoria)
Kennedys Betta Home Living (Queensland)
Kerfoot Electric (NSW)
Kevin Matthews Electrical Pty Ltd (Victoria)
Kevin R Sheather (Northern) Pty Ltd (NSW)
KK Electrical (Northern Territory)

Business/Employer Consulted
Klimate Solutions (Tasmania)
Laser Electric Ballarat (Victoria)
Laser Electric Bendigo (Victoria)
Lawerence and Hanson (NSW)
LED Pty Ltd (ACT)
Legrand Australia Pty Ltd (NSW)
Lightspeed Electrical (NSW)
Lorking Electrical (ACT)
M.N. Electrocom (Victoria)
MACS Applinaces (Queensland)
Malcolm Watson Electrical (NSW)
Mark Duncan Electrical & Data Installations (NSW)
Mark Hyland Electrical (NSW)
Martin Donnelly Pty Ltd (ACT)
Master Electricans Australia (Queensland)
Matt Hatty Electrical (NSW)
MBL Rowland and RA Briggs (NSW)
McKnights Electrical (Victoria)
McNamara Electrical & Data Services
McNamara Electrical & Data Services
Medtek Pty Ltd (Queensland)
Mekina Technologies (Tasmania)
Metroid Electrical Engineering (Victoria)
Meyers Electrical (SA)
M J Miller Electrical (Tasmania)
MMEM Group (Tasmania)
Mobile Electrics (Northern Territory)
MR & RA Mackenzie (NSW)
Mullco Pty Ltd (NSW)
Murtec Sevices (Tasmania)
NECA Education and Careers (Victoria)
NECA Education and Careers (Tasmania)
NECA Group Training (ACT)
NECA Group Training (NSW)
Network Electrical (ACT)
New Era Electrical (NSW)
NGT Pty Ltd (NSW)
NHP Group (Tasmania)
NHP Group (NSW)
Nilsen (NSW) Pty Ltd (NSW)
Nilsen Australia (Queensland)

Business/Employer Consulted	Business/Employer Consulted
Nilsens NT (Northern Territory)	Sprint Electrical (NSW)
Nilson SA Pty Ltd (SA)	Star Group (NSW)
Niramar Pty Ltd (SA)	Stephen Moseley Electrical (NSW)
NUVO Group (Victoria)	Steve Torpy Electrical & Security (NSW)
O'Donnell Griffin (NSW)	Steve Wright Electrical (NSW)
Parmalat Australia (Victoria)	Stowe Australia (National) (NSW)
Pasma Electrical (Queensland)	Stowe Australia Canberra (ACT)
Pathways Communication (ACT)	T.J. Coutts Electrical Contractors (Victoria)
Paul Ryan Electrical (NSW)	TAFE NSW Riverena Institute (NSW)
PDW Aust Pty Ltd (Victoria)	TAFE Queenland (Queensland)
Perigon (Queensland)	TAFE SA Elizabeth Campus (SA)
PM Electric (NSW)	TAFE SA Tomsley Campus (SA)
PEER VEET (SA)	TAZ Electrical Pty Ltd (Tasmania)
Power-Comm Electrical & Communications (Queensland)	Team Electrical (WA)
Powerplus Lighting and Elctrical Supplies (NSW)	TLE Group (NSW)
PowerTX Pty Ltd (Queensland)	Top End Group Training (NT)
Programmed Electrical Technologies (NSW)	Top Notch Electrical (SA)
Programmed Electrical Technologies (Victoria)	Transfield (Victoria)
Programmed Electrical Technologies (Queensland)	Trevor Hennersey Electrical (Victoria)
Protected Electrical (ACT)	Twin Electrics and Plumbing (Victoria)
Q Electrical (Queensland)	Tye Electrical & Communications (NSW)
Queensland Depertment of Education and Training (Queensland)	UAM Pty Ltd (Queensland)
Raymond John Haslam (NSW)	VIP Electrical (SA)
RBD Electrical (Tasmania)	Walrus Electrical Pty Ltd (NSW)
Recips Electrical (Victoria)	WEC Group Pty Ltd (NSW)
Rex Barrett Electrical (ACT)	Well Connected Pty Ltd (Victoria)
Rexel (Tasmania)	Wilken Electric Service (NSW)
RIC Electrics (NSW)	Work and Training (Tas)
Robert Murphy Electrical (Victoria)	Zenadth Kes (Queensland)
Ron Bateman Pty Ltd (NSW)	
Royston Electrical (Victoria)	
SB Air Control Pty Ltd (NSW)	
SCD Tech Pty Ltd (Victoria)	
Schneider Electrics (Tasmania)	
Selkirk Brick Company (Victoria)	
Shane Hill Electrical (Tasmania)	
Shep Electrical (ACT)	
Skills Tasmania (Tasmania)	
Smith-Spratt Pty Ltd (NSW)	
Solar Hub (ACT)	

Attachment 2

EIAPMS PROJECT ENHANCEMENT
Employer Engagement
Reviewing Key Project Elements
Advanced Organiser

Pilot Project – Key Project Elements		The context and framework for the consultation sessions - Employer Views on project outcome tools and processes their impact
Apprentice Register & Data Management Systems	***National Apprenticeship Register –*** Pilot recruitment and employer access to pre-assessed candidates	*Employers views;* • On the usefulness of NAR in the brokerage of training positions. • Capacity of the NAR to help them identify eligible students and select suitable apprenticeship candidates • If selected pre-assessed candidates have proven *'ready'* to be successful in an electrical apprenticeship • Issues of currency and maintenance post project.

	E-Profiling - Workplace evidence gathering tool (profiling system)	*Employers views/understanding;*
		• That the e Profiling system used satisfy requirements for achievement of the 'on-the-job component' (agreed industry benchmarks are set based on apprentices achieving satisfactory targets using the Workplace e Profiling system')
		• Do employers have the confidence that e Profiling system
		  - fosters the supply of valid and reliable evidence for reporting against business quality assurance measures/formal benchmarks/regulatory requirements, and
		  - ensures consistency and quality in training and assessment outcomes?
		• That the web-based tool allows for the accurate reporting of the tasks apprentices undertake in the workplace – does it eliminate the need for unwieldy and time-consuming paper work/paper-based logbooks.
		• That the process adequately informs an RTO that adequate workplace performance has been demonstrated to support a judgement regarding an apprentice's competence in a specified unit of competency
		• The role of the RTO in developing understanding of 'on-the-job' performance that will be monitored using electronic profiling technology - tracking the scope of work undertaken and level of supervision under which it was conducted
		• Incentives for apprentice/supervisor/Apprentice Master/owner
		• Use/issues in maintenance.

	LMS	*Employers views/understanding;* • Of the Energise Oz LMS to provide the support structure for the Blended Learning (BL) and up to date information on unit assessment availability and result reporting • Of apprentices greater flexibility to undertake assessment at any time, according to their individual circumstances using unit assessments that are available via the LMS platform -allow assessment activities based on the critical knowledge and skill requirements of a unit, to be generated and marked electronically, regardless of physical location.

Apprentice Readiness Framework	***The Readiness Assessment -*** Apprentices who entered the pilot sat a readiness assessment, with a specific focus on numeracy (maths) skills, to ensure they had the technical capacity to undertake their training	*Employers views/understanding;* • On the role of the *'Readiness Assessment' (RA)* in identifying and addressing potential barriers to success before a candidate begins their apprenticeship. • Of the *RA's* capacity to form the basis of the apprentice's skills profile – which can develop as they progress through their apprenticeship and guide the ongoing provision of support services • Of the *RA's* capacity to identify the issues which an individual may need to assist them to be more productive from the outset in the workplace and complete their onerous off the job requirement. • On the balance /makeup of test – functionality - Application improvements • Process including role of Mentor – Advisor or resource post Project.
	Other Pre-testing/Screening	*Employers' views/understanding* - on the further need to develop online tools which will ensure the **use of a *national industry recruitment and skills needs assessment tool*** identifies and reports on the types of attributes that successful apprentices possess i.e. • *Self-Assessment Screening Component* – which can be designed to assist potential candidates in considering their suitability for positions as apprentices in a specific industry sector assessing a potential candidate's suitability before they decide whether to apply for an apprenticeship? • *Desirable Aptitudes and Attitudes* - which can be designed to measure and report on desirable aptitudes and attitudes customised to different Industry sectors(e.g. Commercial, Residential, Industrial) - the customisation of the *ACER WPI tool* for the electro technology industry.
Apprentice Progression based on Industry Agreed Benchmarks	**CBP arrangements/ *Wage Implications and Associated Processes***	*Employers' understanding* • Of the implications of Fair Work Australia decisions on the apprenticeship arrangements; • Of the concepts of competency-based training and progression – i.e. - the use of the term *competency-based progression* as the generic or overarching term used to describe the new practice model that will replace the 'time-served' notion; - term *competency-based training* being used to characterise those behaviours and procedures associated with the *'act of training'* and require the inclusion of the following features: - performance criteria that include measures of proficiency; the need for formal endorsement of the employer in the competency assessment process; role of formal endorsement; training plans that are developed between the RTO, the employer and the apprentice - Distinction between *competency based training progression* and *competency-based wage progression* (CBWP) - Distinction between CBWP and *competency based completion.*

| ***Industry Agreed Benchmarks -*** the premise of the Energise Oz pilot program is for apprentices to progress based on the achievement of Industry set benchmarks, rather than the traditional mode of time served | • Employer confidence in the CBP arrangements, including wage progression and RTO/employer sign off on competence;

 Employer *Understanding of;*

 • *the purpose of the Industry Benchmarks* –

   - As a quality assurance system that has been set up by the industry to ensure apprentices are competent and safe to advance to the next stage of training and

   - Ensuring that electrical apprentices have retained the relevant skills and knowledge in each phase - this is critical as the industry moves to a competency-based progression model of training.

 • *The structure of the Industry Benchmarks* - i.e. the competency based progression program being divided into four (4) training phases – with each phase having an industry identified benchmark which include agreed benchmarks for the 'off' the job component and the 'on' the job component.

 • *How apprentices progress* - the process of how an apprentice moves from one phase to the next to move from one phase to the next –

   - to move from one phase to the next, apprentices sit an Industry Progression Benchmark Assessment (IPBA) –

   - Apprentices undertake an end of phase revision unit plus the IPBA and if required, areas of improvement are identified to be able to tackle the subsequent phase of training. Before apprentices can sit an IPBA, they need to have satisfied the on-the-job (relevant work experience) and off-the-job (trade training) requirements

   - When apprentices sit the IPBA do employers understand that it is a knowledge test and a skills test with a qualified assessor and that the tests are mapped to the 66 Essential Performance Capabilities which are mapped to the core competency standard units of the electrical apprenticeship qualification:

   - The role of the Mentor in the process verifying information, reviewing and confirming e-profiling and academic results, and preparing rremedial plans if required

 • *The Benchmark Tests* – i.e. randomly generated by the Energise Oz LMS platform - the apprentice completes the tests online which are automatically marked results are emailed to the RTO – that the Benchmark Skills Test is also accessed from the LMS platform by the assessor prior to the apprentice undertaking the test to prepare the practical facilities in the Training Institute -the Skills Test results are uploaded on the Energise Oz LMS by the Assessor. |

Apprentice Support	***Mentor Support -*** Employers involved in the Pilot have had access to a Mentor-Advisor who has provided additional assistance in ensuring an ultimate environment for apprentices to meet Benchmark Progression Points	• *Employers views* on the use and role of the Mentor - Advisor to the apprentice, employer and the RTO in providing additional assistance for apprentices to meet Benchmark Progression Points by; - Profiling – Monitoring Progression - On – Off Job Training Progression (identification of unbalanced outcomes - balance of progress between on and off the job), - Identifying potential barriers to progression identified through readiness indicators, • *Employers' views* on triggers for Mentor-Advisor intervention (e.g. insufficient work role rotation, particularly in the final stages of the qualification) have been identified – how the Mentor-Advisor cooperated with the employer to manage and resolve issues. • *Employers' views* on how the removal of the service impact on apprentices?
Training and Flexibility	***Current Certificate III and coverage of on the job experience***	*Employers views* • On their familiarity with the Industry Training Package • On the apprenticeship training period and the business economic cycle; the nature of contracting work • On the linking of structured off-the-job training to the practical work-based experience gained by apprentices.
	Flexibility of current project in training delivery	*Employers views* -on the need for more flexible training pathways to meet their needs - i.e. • Creative approaches to timetabling, blocking, and pedagogy, with a higher level of integration between work and learning • Making greater use of *'downtime'* of apprentices to deliver *'block training'* • Use of Pre-apprenticeship as an important preparation for an apprenticeship.
	Blended Learning Resources/Online /Other training materials - access to online learning resources to assist in the management of varied apprentice progression - providing them with the opportunity to move ahead or consolidate their learning, based on their individual circumstances	*Employers views* • On the introduction of blended learning delivery by some training providers and out of hours off the job training which provides more flexible opportunities to complete the apprenticeship. • On the benefits of BL to guide the individual learning experiences of a diverse group –i.e. personalising the learning experience, tailoring a training response to each individual's needs and using online interactive training resources to maximise the learners' development. • On manage each apprentice's learning journey - using technology to assist the monitoring and amending of each training plan and selecting and applying appropriate guidance to each individual apprentice • On the use of topic content quizzes from the Energise Oz LMS to perform assessments but are also encouraged to use their own material including texts books, learning resources and practicals. • On providing RTOs with as many training resources as possible, so they can select the right one for any particular situation and learning preference.