



## **Introduction**

This report details actions resulting from the industry forum held at the Corus Hotel Hobart on Wednesday 10 March 2004.

The forum targeted the electrical energy industry sector and principally focussed on the barriers and associated issues in the employment of apprentices and trainees by medium to small businesses.

Responses to the survey done in conjunction with the forum have been incorporated. Approximately 100 survey responses were received.

## **Participation**

Approximately 70 people with an involvement in the electrical energy sector attended the forum, with a good representation of electrical contractors. Government, unions and other energy businesses were also represented.

The benefit of having a large representation of electrical contractors was that they could contribute concerns, information and opinions that only those with such a first hand view of small business and the issues around employing apprentices can provide.

## **Issues**

Several key issues dominated the discussion. The following comments are typical examples (note that these comments are not necessarily the views of all participants but rather an indicator of main discussion points.):

- The industry is not attractive to young people therefore there is a shortage of suitable applicants;
- Employers find it difficult to retain apprentices once they obtain qualifications;
- Many employers have the view that it is not a worthwhile investment to spend the time and effort in training an apprentice only to lose them to another contractor, intra-state or to another part of the electro technology industry as soon as they qualify;

- Concern at the low numbers of apprentices that successfully complete the profiling/capstone assessment at the first attempt;
- A view that young people today do not have a suitable work ethic for the industry and generally lack in employability skills.

It was clearly expressed that the contractors wanted the forum to be more than just a 'talk fest' and a clear desire existed for a follow up meeting to identify solutions for implementation.

This meeting would include consideration of:

- the issues;
- ways of addressing the issues including industry sourced solutions; and
- who is responsible for actions?

It was also recommended that while some issues have clear linkages with education and training other issues are more about labour market, employment and/or industrial relations matters.

## Outcomes

The follow-up meeting was held on Monday 5th July 2004 at the Old Woolstore Hotel with participation from the forum attendees. The meeting was facilitated by Ms Lynne Fitzgerald (Secretary, Unions Tasmania and TIAG member).

Addressing the issues raised at the first TIAG Energy forum the meeting heard from:

- Mr Steven Brown (Department of Education Science and Training) provided an overview of the New Apprenticeship Incentives Program which included a handout (see attached). The meeting resolved that Mr Brown note the concerns raised by the group and ensure the concerns raised be included in any departmental review of the scheme.
- Mr Michael Brough (Director - Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training) in his role as Chairperson of the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Review Committee provided an update on the review of the *Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act*. The report due to be presented to Cabinet took into consideration submissions from several industry sectors including the Electrical Industry and included recommendations from the Review Committee.

This meeting discussed common issues raised at the forum and collected through the industry survey. Discussions focused on the need to promote and raise the profile of the Energy Industry to potential new entrants, parents, school teachers and the general public to attempt to attract more suitable applicants to enter the Energy Industries.

Some of the suggestions arising from the meeting were:

- Look into obtaining a copy of the NSW developed CD – “Power Up” for distribution to secondary schools and colleges.
- There is a huge need for access to good career information in schools and colleges, and the need to target and educate teachers and parents.
- National Industry Skill Council could look at producing and promoting marketing material.
- Organise tours for teachers and parents around different industry sectors.
- Those with experience in the industry should be encouraged to promote industry from their own experiences.
- VET in Schools programs are introducing people to electrical trades. It is an academically demanding industry.
- Industry is taking students for work experience but there is a lack of knowledge and preparation of students for the workplace.
- Teachers need to make linkages with the industry and workplace.
- Commitment and attitude the best attributes for employment. A sense of pride in notable Australian achievements should be articulated or promoted. Very powerful. E.g. Sydney Harbour Bridge and snow field projects
- IT, Arts etc. have a very high profile in career orientation.
- Shake perception of teachers and parents and break cultural mindset. Post-Compulsory Education and Training Strategy careers promotion may assist in this.
- There is an attitude that education maths and sciences are different to the content in the VET requirements. Under budget initiatives these issues are being addressed but are they targeting Compulsory Education at Grade 9 & 10 before there is a risk of them dropping out of the system

- Need to sell the career paths in electrical/electrotechnology – not just a trade.
- Maybe arrange forums for young people and industry representatives.
- Create a register of employers willing to offer students insight into industry both off and on site. Show what reality is – not perception.

## Conclusion

Advance these issues through a meeting with Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training Vocational Education and Learning (VEL) Unit with a view to further coordinate actions in relation to career opportunity advice. E.g.

1. VicTec/TasTec pre-employment and at “risk of disengaging” programs which have proved successful in Victoria.
2. Organising career nights for VET streams and part time apprenticeships (works well). Can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The group also explored ways the Energy Industry could retain apprentices post trade and attract qualified electricians back into the Industry. Factors put forward at the meeting that are influencing the Energy Industry workforce are:

- Contractors stay in career approximately 16-20 years.
- Injuries and lack of mobility decide the break from industry in many circumstances
- There is contraction with less 3rd year apprentices than those doing the electrical contractors’ course.
- Entry level requirements are now higher. It is not clear how this has occurred and now potential candidates have higher expectations for themselves
- Up to end of 4th year, apprentices are not allowed to take responsibility and work unsupervised therefore there is no opportunity to gradually take responsibility, (work unsupervised and reap the rewards of their work). Too big a shift from being fully supervised to being “let loose” as a qualified tradesperson. “Supervision is discretionary”.

In exploring these factors the following actions were recommended for employers to consider:

- Put strategies in place to maintain contact and enable return to previous company.
- Make retention more attractive by offering bonuses/rewards to stay after apprenticeship.
- Plan career path and set goals with your apprentice.
- Training course for contractors in recruitment and retention. (Career path and management training).
- Look at programs to bring people back into the Industry.

Subsequently an action group met in Hobart on Friday 27th August 2004 to explore:

1. Opportunities for electrical businesses to connect effectively with schools and colleges, Including
  - Latest developments in schools
  - What are the needs of employers? what are the needs of schools and colleges? and how to meet the needs
  - Opportunities for employers.
2. Alternatives approaches to the usual apprentice model of recruitment that broaden the range of potential apprentices, Including
  - People that may not have been first choices in the past and
  - Other entry options.
3. Opportunities through the Workforce Development Fund, Including
  - Opportunities for HR management training for employers
  - Other opportunities.

The Focus Group consisted of representatives from industry and relevant Government departments:

**From industry**

Greg Hall                      Alanna Hall                      Carl Hawtree                      Robert Stops  
Maurice Graham      Andrew Harris                      Warren Crichton

**From TIAG**

Lyn Fitzgerald

**From the Department of Economic Development**

Jan Condon

**From Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training**

Keith Thompson      Jane Bell      Wendy Rockliffe      Dave Olden

ISSUES DISCUSSED	OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Labour market is tighter than before in recent experience, the population and workforce is aging and staff recruitment and retention is difficult.</li> <li>2. How to get the message to youth, parents and teachers, particularly career teachers about what work in the industry is like and the opportunities available. Need to get information to grade 8 and 9 students.</li> <li>3. Need to be able to “handpick” some students to attract the most able and those who are enthusiastic.</li> <li>4. Work experience is an issue. Businesses need to understand it better</li> <li>5. Industry image is an issue</li> <li>6. The need to keep the timing of the theory component of training in line with the practical component</li> <li>7. Resources would be needed (eg for a travelling roadshow)</li> <li>8. Appropriate wages for mature age apprentices</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact points in OPCET and Economic Development</li> <li>2. Industry Visits to schools and colleges – a travelling roadshow, possibly sponsored.</li> <li>3. Focus on students that are keen, follow-up, nurture the interest, work experience opportunities</li> <li>4. VET in schools</li> <li>5. School based apprentices</li> <li>6. Available materials eg Power-up CD</li> <li>7. VCAL experience (electricians)</li> <li>8. Promote the career not just the trade</li> <li>9. Promote the way the fire service does in schools</li> <li>10. TAFE industry reference group</li> <li>11. Adult entry points</li> <li>12. Subsidies for adult apprentices</li> <li>13. National initiatives – pilots for fast tracking etc</li> </ol>

### **ACTION 1.**

Andrew Harris, Carl Hawtree, Robert Stops and Greg Hall will contact Jan Condon with a view to the industry using the possibilities available through the Workforce Development Fund. This will include using the Fund and associated processes to build greater human resource management skills within businesses. They will use industry networks to promote the opportunities available.

This action has commenced and coincided with the joint launch of the Fast Track Skills Initiative by the Minister for Economic Development Lara Giddings MHA and the Minister for Education Paula Wriedt MHA on 9 September 2004 at BSH Electrical in Hobart.

Group meetings and individual appointments can be arranged through contacting the above industry representative, who are acting on behalf of industry to co-ordinate the information sessions. Alternatively contact can be made directly with the Department of Economic Development Project officers Bridget Hiller on 03 6233 5739 or Jan Condon on 03 6233 5643.

## **ACTION 2**

Energy Skills Australia will investigate with industry, the possibilities available for pursuing the examples discussed for up-skilling existing workers from other fields and employing adult apprentices.

## **ACTION 3**

OPCET will investigate the availability and use of the Power-Up CD with a view to obtaining a copy for use.

This action has commenced with OPCET obtaining a copy of the CD and pursuing copyright permission to make changes to the CD to increase relevance to Tasmania. The CD in its current form has links to the NSW ITAB website. It is intended to change the link to the National Industry Skills Council website currently being updated

## **ACTION 4**

The industry participants in the meeting will participate in a pilot program to promote working in the industry, to schools. This pilot will be facilitated by OPCET (Jane Bell, Vocational Education and Learning Unit) and will aim to engage with and provide supporting processes to an appropriate group of grade 9 and 10 students and staff in 2 or 3 schools, using role models (eg recent apprentices), the CD, speakers, information. Energy Skills Australia will liaise with OPCET on this.

## **ACTION 5**

A record of these actions will be sent to forum participants and perhaps published on an industry website.

## **ACTION 6**

Dave Olden (Industry Liaison Officer) will review action and encourage where necessary

# OVERVIEW OF NEW APPRENTICESHIPS EMPLOYER INCENTIVES

Incentives for Commencements before 1/01/2003	1/01/2003	Incentives for Commencements after 1/01/2003 AND before 1/07/2003	1/07/2003	Incentives for Commencements after 1/07/2003
Commencement		Commencement		Commencement
Commencement (II, III, IV) \$ 1,375		Commencement (II, III, IV) \$ 1,375		Commencement (II) \$ 1,375
				Commencement (III/IV) \$ 1,650
Additional Commencements		Additional Commencements		Additional Commencements
GTO for Traineeship		GTO for Traineeship		GTO for Traineeship
Commencements (II,III,IV) \$ 1,100		Commencements (II,III,IV) \$ 1,100		Commencements (II,III,IV) \$ 1,100
Sporting Operations (II) \$ 1,650		Sporting Operations (II) \$ 1,650		Sporting Operations (II) \$ 1,650
Drought Areas (II) \$ 1,650		Drought Areas (II) \$ 1,650		Drought Areas (II) \$ 1,650
Women In Non Traditional Occupations (II,III,IV) \$ 1,100		Women In Non Traditional Occupations (II,III,IV) \$ 1,100		School-based New Apprentices (II, III, IV) \$ 825
				Special Commencements
		Innovation (III/IV) \$ 1,210		Innovation (III/IV) \$ 1,210
		School-based New Apprentices (II, III, IV) \$ 825		Women In Non Traditional Occupations (II,III,IV) \$ 1,100
		Rural & Regional Skills Shortages paid on Commencement (III/IV) \$ 1,100		Rural & Regional Skills Shortages paid on Commencement (III/IV) \$ 1,100
				Mature Aged Workers (II, III, IV) \$ 825
Progression		Progression		Progression
Progression (II to III/IV) \$ 1,375		Progression (II to III/IV) \$ 1,375		Progression Abolished -
Rural & Regional Skills Shortages paid on Progression (II to III/IV) \$ 1,100		(R&R Progression, moved to commencement)		-
Completion		Completion		Completion
Completion III/IV (excluding NFP GTOs, except where recommencement paid) \$ 1,650		Completion III/IV (excluding NFP GTOs, except where recommencement paid) \$ 1,650		Completion III/IV (ALL employers including NFP GTOs) \$ 2,750
Additional Completions		Additional Completions		Additional Completions
Sporting Operations (II) \$ 1,650		Sporting Operations (II) \$ 1,650		Sporting Operations (II) \$ 1,650
Drought Areas (II) \$ 1,650		Drought Areas (II) \$ 1,650		Drought Areas (II) \$ 1,650
				Mature Aged Workers (II, III, IV) \$ 825
Recommencement		Recommencement		Recommencement
Recommencement III/IV (excluding NFP GTOs) \$ 825		Recommencement III/IV (excluding NFP GTOs) \$ 825		Recommencement III/IV (ALL employers, including NFP GTOs) \$ 825
Recommencement III/IV (NFP GTOs) \$ 550		Recommencement (NFP GTOs) III/IV \$ 550		-
		Other		Other
		School-based New Apprentices Retention (II, III, IV) \$ 825		School-based New Apprentices Retention (II, III, IV) \$ 825

