



## **THE ELECTRICAL AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

The Electrical and Communications Association of Western Australia Inc, supports the interests of the electrical, electronic, communications, instrumentation, refrigeration and air-conditioning industry ("Industry") in the State of Western Australia.

The reference to "NECA WA Group" consists of the following entities, each with a role to play in the development of the Industry:

- **ECA WA** – the peak electrotechnology industry association in WA, which currently has more than 1,400 members.
- **Electrical Group Training (EGT)** – a registered Group Training Organisation (GTO) which currently employs more than 500 apprentices and hires them to over 200 contracting businesses throughout Western Australia.
- **College of Electrical Training (CET)** – a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) currently providing vocational training to more than 1,600 apprentices and post-trade training to more than 4,000 licensed electricians and contractors.
- **NECA Legal (WA) Pty Ltd** – A legal practice offering legal and industrial relations services to ECA WA members and non-members.
- **NECA National WA Chapter** – the WA branch of the National Electrical Contractors Association ("NECA National"), the electrotechnology industry's peak employer's association.

The NECA WA Group's mission is to improve businesses within the Industry through the provision of excellent advice and services and to maintain and improve its position as the premier providers of quality employment and training services throughout metropolitan and regional Western Australia.

### **NECA WA Group: A Brief History**

In the 1920s, a group of individual electrical contractors recognised the difficulties in running their own businesses in isolation and with little support. As a result, in 1927 they founded the ECA to more effectively deal with issues such as government legislation, trade unions (which were emerging as a force in the industry), builders and complex conditions of contract, training, licensing, safety systems and to more effectively speak with one voice.

In 1975 the Electrical Contractors Association of Western Australia (Union of Employers)('ECA WA') was registered with the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

Nearly thirty years ago (in 1988), members faced a skills shortage, much as they do today. The ECA WA created a group training scheme to address the issue and to assist the Industry to train its own future workforce, while enabling those smaller contractors who were unable to employ an apprentice of their own to engage staff. The Electrical & Electronic Group Apprentice Scheme (EEGAS) began with 12 apprentices. In the mid-1990s, EEGAS changed its name to Electrical Group Training and in May 2000 a new company Electrical Group Training Ltd ('EGT') was registered with ASIC and today it has become one of the most successful Electrical Group Training Organisations in Australia.

Also during the mid-1990s, ECA WA members identified a need to enhance the trade training which was then available – to improve the Industry relevance of training being provided to apprentices and advance the quality and skills of emerging graduates. As a result, the Electrical Electrotechnology Training Centre (EETC) was created. The Training Centre quickly outgrew its accommodation in Malaga and relocated to Balcatta in 1998. On 1 November 1999 the College of Electrical Training Inc ('CET') was registered.

In 2003, ECA WA formed a relationship with NECA National.

Industry leaders began to recognise the value of collaboration between ECA WA, EGT and CET. ECA WA members were employers, EGT supplied apprentices and CET provided the off the job training. By working together it was now possible to provide a complete and superior service to the Industry.

In 2014, ECA WA registered the business and trading name 'NECA WA', and began to promote ECA WA, EGT and CET as part of the NECA WA Group.

In 2018, ECA WA Inc was created and the business and services of EGT, CET were integrated into ECA WA Inc. The ECA WA (Union of Employers) member services (excluding industrial advocacy) were also integrated into ECA WA Inc. The NECA WA Chapter as a Union of Employers took on the role of industrial advocacy and national representation.

## **ECA WA Inc: Present**

ECA WA Inc represents the interests of the electrical, electronic, communications, instrumentation, air-conditioning and refrigeration Industry as a whole. It is committed to raising the profile, business environment and competitive edge of all electrotechnology professionals in Western Australia.

ECA WA Inc's services are tailored to the unique needs of anyone working in the electrotechnology Industry. It employs specialists in technical services, occupational health and safety, management, education and training, human resources. NECA Legal provides advice on commercial, contractual and employment issues. Members and anyone involved in the Industry have access to professional advice, training and up-to-date Industry relevant information on a range of important technical and business issues and receive representation and support in industrial relations matters.

The NECA WA Chapter actively represents the needs and entitlements of employers, ensuring their needs are heard at all levels of government, regulators and Industry.

ECA WA Inc works closely with the NECA WA Chapter and NECA National - an Industry employers association representing contractors who are responsible for the delivery of electrical, refrigeration, voice and data communications systems in Australia. NECA National's membership comprises more than 5,000 businesses across Australia, who employs more than 50,000 tradespeople. Our close relationship with NECA National allows us to contribute and lobby on topics at a Federal Government level. NECA WA Chapter has taken member representation to a more influential level and enjoyed the benefits of its association with NECA National.

## **Electrical Group Training ('EGT')**

EGT currently employs over 500 apprentices, making it the largest employer of electrical apprentices in Australia. These apprentices are, in turn, hosted by more than 200 contracting businesses throughout the state who work on a wide range of projects, from domestic through to the major commercial and industrial installations.

Group Training Organisations like EGT work to benefit both apprentices and host employers. EGT works to ensure there are apprentices available who are placed with host employers, in accordance with workloads and training needs, gaining a breadth of experience across projects and sectors and developing a broad skill base and extensive knowledge. This creates strong career pathways for new entrants to the Industry while assisting host employers through the consistent supply of quality apprentices. Using EGT's services enables businesses to avoid having to commit to a full four year apprenticeship while better managing their human resource requirements to cope with the peaks and troughs of work. The apprentice is assured of continuous employment and, at the successful conclusion of their course a trade is awarded that is a nationally recognised qualification and an internationally renowned electrical workers licence.

EGT has experienced exceptional growth and success since its inception in 1980s. The organisation is focused on recruitment to help meet the electrical training needs of Western Australia's current and future market, which like other states is experiencing a shortage of skilled tradespeople. Due to its extensive Industry networks and a proactive approach to training and development, EGT has a very high success rate boasting a completion rate in excess of 80%.

EGT prides itself on providing apprentices with quality safety training before they are placed with a host employer. New apprentices are also fully equipped and understand how to use their tools and safety gear. Safety continues to be a major part of ongoing training, with all apprentices required to undertake ongoing safety training and assessment as they progress through their apprenticeship.

EGT have had a third party accredited Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) program since 2009 and WorkSafe Platinum certification since 2011. Due to the number of employees trained by EGT, the organisation is in a strong position to influence positive safety behaviour for future generations of electrical workers. The EGT Board and Management take very seriously this opportunity to have a positive effect on electrical worker safety and we have been at the forefront in promoting the use of improved Personnel Protective Equipment, improved apprentice supervision and hand safety.

This is a testament to the Board and staff members' dedication to the safety cause for all employees.

## **College of Electrical Training ('CET')**

The CET currently operates from two Campuses. The Southern Campus at Jandakot has been operating since 2008 specialising in pre-apprentice, apprentice and renewable energy courses such as solar and battery storage. The Joondalup Campus opened its doors in July 2013 with 300 students in training across a variety of courses; a remarkable achievement for a new education facility.

The CET currently trains over 50% of all electrical mechanic apprentices in Western Australia and as a result of this success the CET built the Campus in Joondalup to be a "state-of-the-art" facility providing electrical training using traditional face to face and blended learning techniques. In addition to apprentice training, this new Campus delivers the Certificate IV Instrumentation, hazardous area and it is planned to include sustainable energy training within the near future. Industry is delighted with the opportunities the Joondalup Campus provides, attracting young trainees and apprentices from a wider geographic region in Perth and regional WA. It will ensure even more electrical workers for Industry with a view to shoring up the pool of available trained and qualified talent for the benefit of the Industry.

In March 2014 the Joondalup and the 25 year old Balcatta Campus merged providing all north of the river apprentices and tradespersons with up to date facilities, such as; purpose-built workshops, classrooms, laboratories, a 60-seat auditorium and free student Wi-Fi. The Campus has considerable capacity for future expansion. The Campus also has better access to public transport and boasts parking capacity for over 140 vehicles.

In 2012, in addition to its traditionally delivered pre-apprentice courses the CET introduced "school-based" pre-apprenticeships, which allow young people in Years 11 and 12 to begin training in a trade while still at secondary school.

CET has been the proud recipient of a number of awards. In October 2007, CET participated in a review by an independent Industry panel. The review of 12 training providers, of which CET was one, was carried out under the Star Rating Scheme, an initiative of the Institute of Trade Skills Excellence (ITSE) and implemented by NECA National. CET was one of two private training providers to receive Three Gold Stars, the highest ranking in the scheme, which aims to distinguish excellence in trade training by evaluating providers that are involved in delivering training in electrical and communications technical skills.

In 2010, CET won the WA Small Training Provider of the Year award, presented by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. They were also a nominated finalist for the national awards.

Additionally, instructors with the College, Mr Rodney Grondein, won the E-Oz Trainer of the Year for 2011, Cameron Cherry won the NECA National Trainer of the Year for 2012 and Jim Brown the NECA National Trainer of the Year for 2014.

In 2013, the CET was judged as a finalist in the WA Large Training Provider of the Year award, a significant achievement as this was the College's first qualifying year. In 2014 CET was awarded the Worksafe Platinum award for Safety and won the 2014 WA Large Training Provider of the Year award.

In 2015 Mr Brett Jotta was awarded a Certificate of Commendation for his contribution to training in the NECA National Awards and CET was judged as a finalist in the WA Large Training Provider of the Year award. Most recently the CET was awarded the Worksafe Platinum award for Safety for a second consecutive time.

These awards are testament to CET's commitment to safety, training and the development of highly skilled and work-ready young employees. They reflect the way CET relates to its clients, and gives clients a clear indication of the quality of training they can expect and a comparison of CET with other organisations delivering similar training.

CET's close relationship with Industry in Western Australia ensures the training remains relevant to Industry's changing needs and sets the College apart from its competitors.

## **NECA Legal (WA) Pty Ltd**

### **Background**

ECA WA members continually indicated that professional legal service is one of the most important and valuable services to their businesses. The *Legal Profession Act 2008* provides for incorporated legal practices and in November 2010 NECA Legal (WA) Pty Ltd was formed.

NECA Legal WA currently employs two qualified and experienced legal practitioners as well as support staff to provide legal advice and assistance including representation to ECA WA Inc members and non-members in a wide range of areas.

### **Employment & Industrial Relations**

NECA Legal WA can review and draft employment contracts as well as provide advice and assistance in enterprise bargaining and the drafting and approval of Enterprise Agreements by the Fair Work Commission in a constantly changing Industrial Relations system.

It provides advice and representation in relation to termination of employment for performance issues, misconduct or redundancy. It can assist employers with performance management and disciplinary processes and keep employers abreast of the vital developments in Workplace Relations law and employers' obligations in general.

NECA Legal WA represents electrical contractors in various jurisdictions, including the Fair Work Commission, the WA Industrial Relations Commission, the Industrial Magistrates Court, the Federal Circuit and the Federal Court in relation to employment related matters such as unfair or unlawful dismissal applications, under payment of wages claims, Union 'right of entry' and accusations of adverse action and discrimination.

### **Equal Opportunity & General Legislative Advice**

NECA Legal WA provides legal advice and representation in relation to equal opportunity matters including representation in the relevant Tribunals such as the Equal Opportunity Commission of WA. It includes legal advice on general legislative changes affecting employers in the electrical contracting and communication industries.

### **Prosecutions**

The lawyers at NECA Legal WA provide advice and assistance with regulator interviews and representation in prosecutions by Building and Energy for breaches of Electricity Licensing Regulations.



### **Commercial Contracts, Payment Disputes & Debt Collection**

The NECA Legal WA scope of service includes reviewing and drafting contracts for services and terms and conditions relevant to the Industry.

ECA WA Inc members have exclusive access to free generalist legal advice (limited to telephone advice or a free half an hour consultation) as well as free assistance with debt collection up to the value of \$10,000. It includes the issuing of Letters of Demand to debtors at no cost. The fee for service rates are substantially reduced for members of ECA WA Inc compared to private practice charge-out rates.

NECA Legal WA also provides advice in relation to payment disputes and assistance with the preparation of Applications for Adjudication under the Construction Contracts Act 2004.

For ECA WA Inc members seeking assistance with commercial litigation and specialist areas of law falling outside the NECA Legal WA scope of service, it has a panel of external service providers (including national law firms) who can provide such services to ECA WA Inc members at reduced rates.

## **Awards**

### **State and National Excellence Awards**

The NECA Excellence Awards have been the industry's most sought after and prestigious awards for more than 25 years, providing a rare opportunity for contractors to showcase their impressive projects to their industry colleagues and the wider community.

The Excellence Awards create the vehicle for ECA WA Inc members to promote their successes and their innovative solutions to complex challenges and for them to enjoy the media opportunities and commercial and marketing benefits associated with winning these awards.

Each year ECA WA Inc runs the NECA State Excellence Awards program, the winners of which are automatically eligible for the NECA National Awards, announced annually in November. ECA WA Inc members have regularly excelled in these awards over the years, taking out the annual honours on numerous occasions for the best domestic, commercial, industrial and environmental projects in the country.

### **Apprentice Awards**

Apprentices, the 'life blood' of our Industry, are arguably the most crucial aspect for the future development of the Industry. Attracting and retaining suitable apprentices is a significant challenge for employers. ECA WA Inc believes that recognition and career development opportunities deliver positive reinforcement of the message that becoming an electrical tradesperson is about a long term career choice.

The awards are open to apprentices across the length and breadth of the Industry in WA. The awards acknowledge achievement in many aspects of both educational and practical development. The winning apprentices are offered a prize package which includes career development and enhancement opportunities.

In recent years, apprentices employed by the EGT have been successful, winning industry awards such as the NECA WA Apprentice Awards as well as the National Apprentice Employment Network WA Apprentice of the Year Award (formerly Group Training Australia) and numerous NECA National awards.

### **For further information contact:**

Aidan O'Grady  
General Manager NECA Services  
ECA WA Inc  
Telephone: 08 6241 6100

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