



NSW UE ITAB 140th News Service April 2025

Welcome back from your Easter and ANZAC Day break and the April news service of the NSW Utilities and Electrotechnology ITAB.

Despite the short month, the ITAB is working for our industries by participating in Power Skill Organisation/ITAB roundtable discussions, HIESN meetings, finalising the ITAB conference agenda, and providing feedback to Training Services on futures skills and training package development in our industry.



This issue covers:

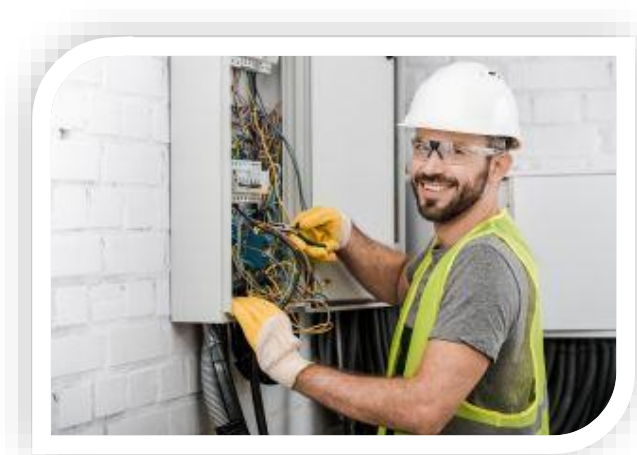
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NSW NEWS

Labor to “fast-track” tradies ticket

A recent article on the 23rd of April 2025 in the Daily Telegraph reported that if the federal Labor government was re-elected that they would *fast-track* the formal qualifications of skilled tradies. This would be done under a \$78 million pledge that aims to boost new home buildings across Australia. A re-elected Labor government would establish an advanced entry trade training program from 2026 to help 6000 unqualified workers get formal recognition. Minister Giles states that “We are making it easier for workers with existing knowledge and skills to get the recognition and qualifications they deserve”

To access the full article by Jade Gailberger, contact the Daily Telegraph at <https://myaccount.news.com.au/public/contactUs/dailytelegraph?backUrl=http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/help/contact-us>



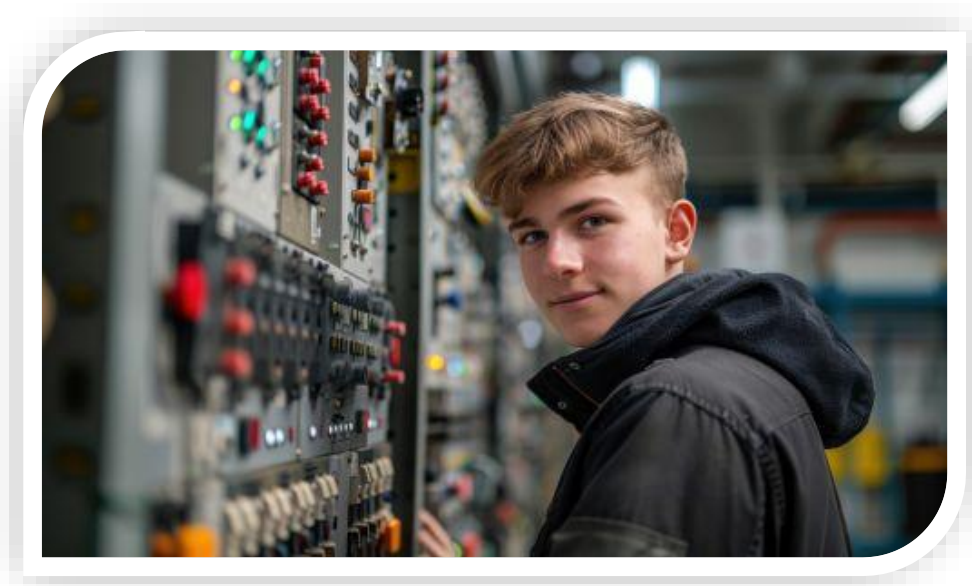
This pledge is a recognition of the success of the NSW Department of Education (Training Services) Trade Pathways for Existing Workers Program. The program has seen more than 1200 achieve their trade qualification in an average of seven months rather than the usual apprenticeship term of approximately 3-4 years. Funded under the previous Federal Liberal Government to the tune of \$53 million, the program, in partnership with industry, developed innovative but qualitative ways to award suitable existing workers formal qualifications. Energy Skills Australia was a recipient of this program and developed innovative ways for the electrical industry under the program. For more information on Energy Skills Australia program visit: <https://energyskillsaustralia.com.au/>

No matter what colour of the government that is elected on Saturday, my strong recommendation is that formal qualifications are NOT “**fast tracked**” at the expense of quality training and the attainment of real trade skills. RTO’s who are awarded this opportunity to potentially apply for this funding, should be registered under Smart and Skilled, have a strong track record in quality RPL and endorsed by key industry stakeholders as having appropriate policies & procedures and a history of quality outcomes.

ITAB Conference 2025

In last month's newsletter I announced that that The Minister for Education Hon Steve Whan would officially open the ITAB's conference in person. The conference will be held on the 4th and 5th **September 2025** at the Hunter Valley Gardens in Pokolbin. A sneak preview of the agenda includes presentations from the NSW Department of Education, NSW Department of Climate Change, the Environment, Energy and Water, EnergyCo, Energy Skills Australia and Powering Skills Australia (PSO). The agenda is currently being finalised and approved by the ITAB board. More details and conference registration information will be available in the next newsletter. We hope to see you there!

NSW Regional Industry and Schools Forums



The NSW UE ITAB will join other NSW ITAB's and the Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEPs) teams for a series of Industry and Schools Forums on the Mid North Coast in May. These forums bring local industry, employers, school career advisers, ITABs and RIEPs together to share intelligence on skills needs, market trends and the pathways starting at school that lead to rewarding careers.

Sessions include:

- Regional overview provided by Regional Development Australia (RDA)
- Local employer discussion panel
- Schools' discussion panel
- Speed meet session for schools and employers
- How to support work placements for schools and employers
- How to get involved with School-based Apprenticeships & Traineeships (SBATs).

Register here for Taree on 27 May, Port Macquarie on 28 May or Coffs Harbour on 29 May.

NSW Higher Education Strategy

Nine out of 10 jobs in the next 10 years will require a post-secondary qualification, with about half needing a university degree. Late last month, Steve Whan NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education launched 'Public Partnerships for Public Benefit: the NSW Higher Education Strategy 2025-29'. The strategy complements the NSW Skills Plan to help grow the skills base and contribute to important workforce sectors, such as health and education, and expand education and career options to students.

The strategy will strengthen equity for post-school learners, regardless of their background and location for example, by consistently applying recognition of prior learning between vocational education and higher education, broadening career pathways and enhancing the overall student experience.

[Click here](#) to read the NSW Higher Education Strategy.

NATIONAL NEWS:

PSO Draft Workforce Development Plan - Consultation stage

The Australian energy, gas and renewables sector is experiencing unprecedented transformation, driven by the rapid shift to clean energy, the rise of technology, the broader shift to electrification. This transition has resulted in numerous large-scale national infrastructure projects and spurred technological innovations in all areas of the sector. Consequently, there has been a growing demand for skilled workers across the industry and an ongoing evolution of the skills required. As the industry experiences this period of transformation, national **level** workforce planning and modelling is required to ensure policies, strategies and initiatives are in place to facilitate the growth and skilling required of the energy sector workforce. A workforce plan is a critical resource to advise government and the private sector on key opportunities, policies, risks and activities that the sector will need to undertake to ensure we have the skilled workforce required for the future and the transition to net zero.

To deliver this, Powering Skills Organisation have released their 2025 workforce development plan consultation paper. Five of the key issues identified are:

- Unmet demand for energy apprenticeships in Australia
- Renewables: net zero workforce and skills need
- Upskilling for post-trade workers
- More career awareness is needed to boost future employment numbers
- Issues in the Energy training packages and the quality of training delivery

This is your chance to help shape the future of the workforce of the future for our industry by participating in the survey.

For more information visit: <https://poweringskills.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/PSO-2025-Energy-Sector-Workforce-Plan-Consultation-Paper.pdf>

or fill out the online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FZFSSNW>



Revised RTO standards come into full regulatory effect July 1st 2025

The revised Standards will come into full regulatory effect from 1 July 2025. The *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* will apply until then.

The revised Standards represent a step change in all Governments' shared ambition to lift quality and integrity across the entire sector, through enabling a more flexible, robust, and quality-driven approach to regulation. Together, Commonwealth and state and territory Skills Ministers have endorsed the revised Standards for RTOs for public release.

Changes to the Standards are designed to better reflect the diversity of the VET sector and ensure the Standards are fit-for-purpose across different RTO settings. This will help to embed quality aspirations and ensure the Standards clearly articulate characteristics required of RTOs to foster a shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality delivery for all users of the VET system.

The revised Standards provide a clearer and more direct link between the requirements RTOs are expected to meet and the outcomes they are expected to deliver.

[Policy Guidance](#) has been developed and is available to support training providers, trainers and assessors in understanding the intent behind changes to the revised Standards.

For more information visit: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/standards-for-rtos>

Apprenticeship Incentive Review - Closes 15th May 2025

The Commonwealth's Apprenticeship Incentive Review "Skills for Tomorrow" consultation closes on 15 May. If you would like more information on this strategic review, or to provide a written submission, [click here](#). All submissions are available on the [consultation hub](#).

As part of its initial response, the Government has made additional investments to:

- Maintain the 2025 Priority List and extend current Australian Apprentice Training Support and Priority Hiring Incentive payment settings until 31 December 2025. This will provide consistency for employers and cost-of-living relief to apprentices in priority occupations during the consultation process.
- Increase the Living Away from Home Allowance from 1 July 2025 so apprentices can meet the costs associated with moving to take up an apprenticeship.
- Increase the Disability Australian Apprentice Wage Support payment from 1 July 2025 to support employers taking on apprentices with disability. Annual review checks for apprentices with permanent disability will also be removed to reduce administrative burden.
- Introduce a new Key Apprenticeship Program with a Housing Construction Apprenticeship stream to help achieve Australia's housing commitments until 30 June 2029. This will also help with cost-of-living pressures by providing eligible apprentices in high priority construction occupations with up to \$10,000 during their apprenticeship.

The Government also introduced a new program effective from 1 January 2025 providing small and medium businesses with access to subsidised Group Training Organisation (GTO) fees for up to 400 apprentice places, including a 20% target for female apprenticeships. These initial investments respond to urgent recommendations of the Review, such as cost-of-living pressures.

Creating an Energy Sector Gateway project



This project initially focused on a pathway's qualification for pre-apprenticeships in electrotechnology occupations. However, during consultations, industry feedback raised a concern that no qualification currently exists for school-age individuals to explore the various energy sub-sectors and gain a comprehensive understanding of the work involved. This gap potentially excludes a cohort of learners who might otherwise pursue pre-apprenticeship qualifications in their chosen energy sector occupation.

In response to this feedback, the PSO Technical Committee revised the purpose of the gateway qualification's design to support energy sector pathways by introducing students to a spectrum of sector opportunities, encompassing both renewable and non-renewable energy industries. While there is strong industry support for the concept, questions remain regarding its implementation and whether schools would be open to adopting a separate Certificate II qualification.

The Certificate II qualification in Electrotechnology has long been a widely recognised entry point for individuals entering the energy sector. However, recent changes to the UEE22020 Certificate II in Electrotechnology (Career Start) have complicated the pathway for learners, resulting in reduced conversion rates into energy sector careers. The current qualification structure no longer aligns with industry needs or career pathways, and it fails to provide a seamless entry into a rapidly evolving industry.

As such, it was decided to split the Cert II Gateway project into two distinct projects: immediate fixes to existing UEE Certificate II qualifications to address implementation issues, and continuing development of a new Gateway qualification. With this refocus, PSO was granted an extension until December 2025 to complete these projects.

Development on the Pathway qualification/s, including a full review of the Certificate II in Electrotechnology (Career Start), will now be absorbed as part of the comprehensive UEE training product review with anticipated submission in December 2026.

Engagement activities regarding these projects have now commenced, including information Webinars and feedback surveys. More information can be found on the Consultation tab of the PSO [project webpage](#).

INDUSTRY NEWS

Western Power fined \$220,000 for unsafe connection with 'extremely high' risk

Western Power in Western Australia has been fined \$220,000 for the unsafe supply of electricity to a house in Wundowie, north-east of Perth, where two nearby residents received electric shocks and "the entire neighbourhood was at risk", according to a magistrate.

At Perth Magistrates Court on 7 March 2025, the network operator pleaded guilty to two offences under WA's electricity regulations following prosecution by Building and Energy.

The penalty is the largest fine against Western Power under laws that prohibit a network operator from supplying electricity to a premises without ensuring it is safe to do so. It follows seven prior convictions against Western Power for the same type of offence.

The court was told that in November 2022, two Western Power workers attended the Wundowie property where a private electrical contractor had installed a new consumer power pole. One Western Power worker noticed the newly installed meter had incorrect wiring – with the active and neutral conductors transposed – but did not take any action.

The transposed wiring enabled the electric current to bypass safety devices, putting the homeowners and neighbours at risk of electric shock if they touched metallic water pipes or earthed electrical appliances.

This process is called reverse polarity. This problem has been at the heart of why key industry stakeholders have been trying to improve the skills and knowledge of line workers! This is something our dear colleague and previous Chairman David Britten was strong on.

WA's Director of Energy Safety, Saj Abdoolakhan, said the significant fine clearly showed the seriousness of the offences.

"It is beyond belief that the network operator connected the electricity supply when there was an obvious hazard and no compliance notice," Mr Abdoolakhan said.

"Someone could have paid the ultimate price for this serious breach, which clearly shows why electrical safety laws and requirements are in place. This situation was easily avoidable by following legislation and, in fact, Western Power's own processes.

"This penalty should send a clear message to network operators about their community safety responsibilities."

Lessons to be learnt:

- Electricity supply reconnected despite incorrect wiring and no compliance tag
- Residents and neighbours at risk of serious injury or death from 'live' objects
- Western Power has seven previous convictions for the same type of offence
- The importance of WHS training and compliance.
- **For more information contact:** BEmedia@demirs.wa.gov.au

Hunter and Sydney Industry Electrical Safety Networks

The next Sydney Industry Electrical Safety Network will be held on 5th May 2025. To learn more about SIESN, contact: Robert.Lau@sydneywater.com.au. The Hunter Industry Electrical Safety Network (HISEN) next meeting will be held on the 1st of May 2025. For more details contact Tim Bolam at tim.bolam@tomago.com.au

Happy Belated Easter

Kindest Regards
Melissa Wortman
Executive Officer

NSW U&E ITAB
Mob: +61 421 830 056
Email: melissa@uensw.com.au
Postal Address:
PO Box 1711, CHATSWOOD, NSW, 2057



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