



SHOCKED BY THE JOB

FAILED BY THE SYSTEM

MICHAEL WRIGHT



FIX THE SYSTEM, NOT THE APPRENTICE

We need apprentice electricians to wire Australia into the future economy and build our way out of the housing crisis.

People learning a trade should be taught how to work safe, they need to be getting training on the tools and in the classroom, and they need to have someone in their corner to stand up for them. We need an apprenticeship system that works for apprentices, not the other way round.

Our training system is failing apprentices. We are withholding key safety training until apprentices have been on the tools for more than a year, and this is doubling the rate at which they are experiencing potentially deadly electric shocks.

Over \$200 million of taxpayer money is given to supposed mentors who are absent, ineffective, or actively hostile to the interests of the apprentice they have been paid to support.

Even when apprentices most need support — when they have had their training withheld, they've fallen out with their boss, and even when they've been electrocuted — their mentors fail to show up.

This would be a grave failure of policy and empathy at anytime – but especially now when we need more than 40,000 additional electrical workers in the next five years.

We cannot afford for nearly half of all electrical apprentices to dropout.

Now is the perfect time to fix our broken VET system.

Michael Wright

National Secretary, Electrical Trades Union

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ELECTRICIANS

With the need for tens of thousands more licensed electricians by the end of the decade, it is undeniable that apprentices are the future of the electrical industry.

It is crucial that every apprentice is supported at each step of the way through their training, on and off the job. But right now many apprentices are dropping out.

Abysmal award rates are leading to financial stress. On top of this, delays in training, high risk work, and employers failing to provide adequate supervision and the scope of work required to finish an apprenticeship all coalesce in unsatisfactory completion rates.

As the most vulnerable workers on site, industry must strive to foster a culture in which apprentices are emboldened with the confidence and experience to stand up for themselves in the workplace.

Apprentices' vulnerabilities are exploited by employers using apprentices for cheap labour — employers who fail to provide relevant work, fail to provide adequate supervision, fail to adhere to safe work practices, and fail to enrol and release apprentices for training.

This is why it is so important that apprentices are taught how to build the experience and the support they need to stand up for themselves.

The current ACAP program does not support apprentices facing these vulnerabilities. It fails to identify the exploitation of apprentices, including when their access to training is delayed or outright denied and when they are put at risk of serious injury or death resulting from electric shock.

Apprentices desperately need the support of a program that is grounded in the electrical industry. We need a program that can consistently provide relevant advice and will intervene with employers and VET providers on behalf of apprentices in need.

The current system simply is not good enough; it is failing apprentices, and it is failing the industry. Apprentices are the future of the electrical trade, and as such, we must empower them with the tools needed to complete their apprenticeships and become strong, qualified tradespeople.

Liam Reichman
ETU Apprentice of the Year

LIAM REICHMAN



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Electrical workers are the keystone trade to deliver future of energy and housing abundance. A world in which we are electrifying heating, cooling, cooking, driving, manufacturing and thinking, whilst simultaneously changing what generates that power.

Federal and state governments have a huge agenda to drive Australia's transition to renewable energy and harness our abundant wind and solar resources, to electrify our homes and businesses and drive new green export industries, while at the same time striving to build over a million new homes.

Electrical workers are also in short supply. They have been on the temporary skills shortage list for over three decades, and the shortage is only getting worse.

Jobs and Skills Australia estimated that Australia needs an additional 42,500 electricians by 2030 over and above status quo, just to deliver on the government's renewables targets and Future Made in Australia agenda.⁷ On current completion rates, this would mean boosting the number of apprentices in training by 40% or an additional 22,000 more apprentices (over a current total of 55,000) per year.⁸ This does not include the additional electricians that will be needed to meet Australia's new housing targets, or data centre build.

Numerous factors contribute to this shortfall.⁹ However, there are three clear and immediate constraints:

- the systemic failure of the ACAP regime to sufficiently support apprentices;
- insufficient places in trades schools; and
- insufficient trades teachers to enrol the apprentices Australia needs.¹⁰

Since coming to power, the Albanese government has committed billions of dollars to reverse decades of neglect in the VET sector, and to encourage apprentices in priority sectors, especially clean energy. This funding is significant but after decades of underfunding, it has only proved sufficient to return the VET sector to business as usual. It is not sufficient to deliver the additional workers needed to power an unprecedented, economy-wide transition. An industrial revolution is anything but business as usual.

Without changes to where and how money is spent, the VET sector will not be able to deliver the new workers needed to address this shortfall.

The ETU has been a consistent advocate for better resourcing and support of electrical apprentices. This report builds on previous research to centre the direct experiences of apprentices. It examines how a broken VET system is imperilling apprentices and the energy transition.



⁷ Jobs and Skills Australia (2023), The Clean Energy Generation: Supplementary Modelling Report, p. 17. The 42,500 estimate is based on the 'high' scenario, which broadly corresponds to policy settings that include increased investment in green manufacturing and associated energy infrastructure.

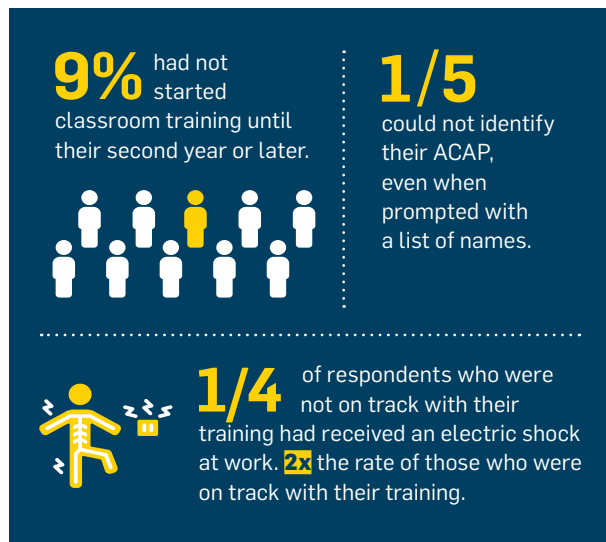
⁸ PSO (2025), High Load, Short Supply, Bridging the Gap to 2030: Powering Skills Workforce Report 2025, p. 14.

⁹ Per Capita (2024), Charged Up: Strategies for Addressing the Skill Shortage in Electrical Trades for the Clean Energy Transition.

¹⁰ NECA (2023), Submission No 20 to Jobs and Skills Australia - Industry Capacity Study Discussion Paper.

The apprentice experience: Training delays, safety risks and failed mentors

In April and May of 2025, the ETU conducted a survey of 447 apprentice members to understand their experience of the apprenticeship. The survey found that:



In August 2025, the ETU interviewed 12 randomly selected apprentices who had responded to the survey and experienced delays in their training and who had received a shock at work.

These interviews revealed a pattern of exploitation, delays in apprentice training, and flagrant disregard by employers of the risks to apprentices of electrical work and the effects of electrical shock.



Significantly, even though interviewees were not selected on the basis of responses relating to their ACAP, they all reported gaps and failures in how these Commonwealth funded entities were performing in their role to mentor apprentices. At best, the support that they received was perfunctory. At worst, the union heard evidence of ACAPs actively working against the interests of the apprentice.

This included stories of taxpayer-funded mentors that failed to find training places for apprentices; did not advocate for apprentices to their employers; did not ensure that their on-the-job training was suitable or properly supervised; did not provide advice to handle disputes with employers and in some cases sided with employers seeking to fire apprentices in disputes.

The research raises questions about the role of the taxpayer-funded ACAP scheme, which funds private companies to mentor and advocate for apprentices to the tune of more than \$200 million a year.

Recommendations

- The federal government must invest in more training places, including supporting trades people to enter the VET sector. Funding must be targeted to those centres with higher-than-average completion rates, to ensure the most productive use of government funds.
- The federal government must actively monitor the extent to which training places are responding to demand, this includes identifying capacity issues in the current system and areas of significant future growth (for example, the greater uptake of electrotechnology in renewable energy zones).
- Consistent with the Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System, the federal government must conduct a review of the ACAP programme ahead of the end of the initial 2-year contract period. The government must give strong regard to redesigning the ACAP programme to place the interests of apprentices at the core of its purpose; and place a tripartite industry approach at the core of its delivery.

THE APPRENTICE JOURNEY

- Apprentice Signs Employment Contract
- Apprentice ACAP + Employer Signs Training Contract



Commence Employment

The apprentice journey is a difficult one.

Electrical work is challenging and technical — and there are many points on the apprentice journey where apprentices may be delayed, encounter difficulties and ultimately drop out.

Of every 10 apprentices that start their apprenticeship:

- 1 will drop out before the end of their first year.
- 1.5 more will drop out before the end of their second year.

By the end of the apprenticeship, over 4/10 will have dropped out.¹¹

Possible **18-month** delay to commence classroom training

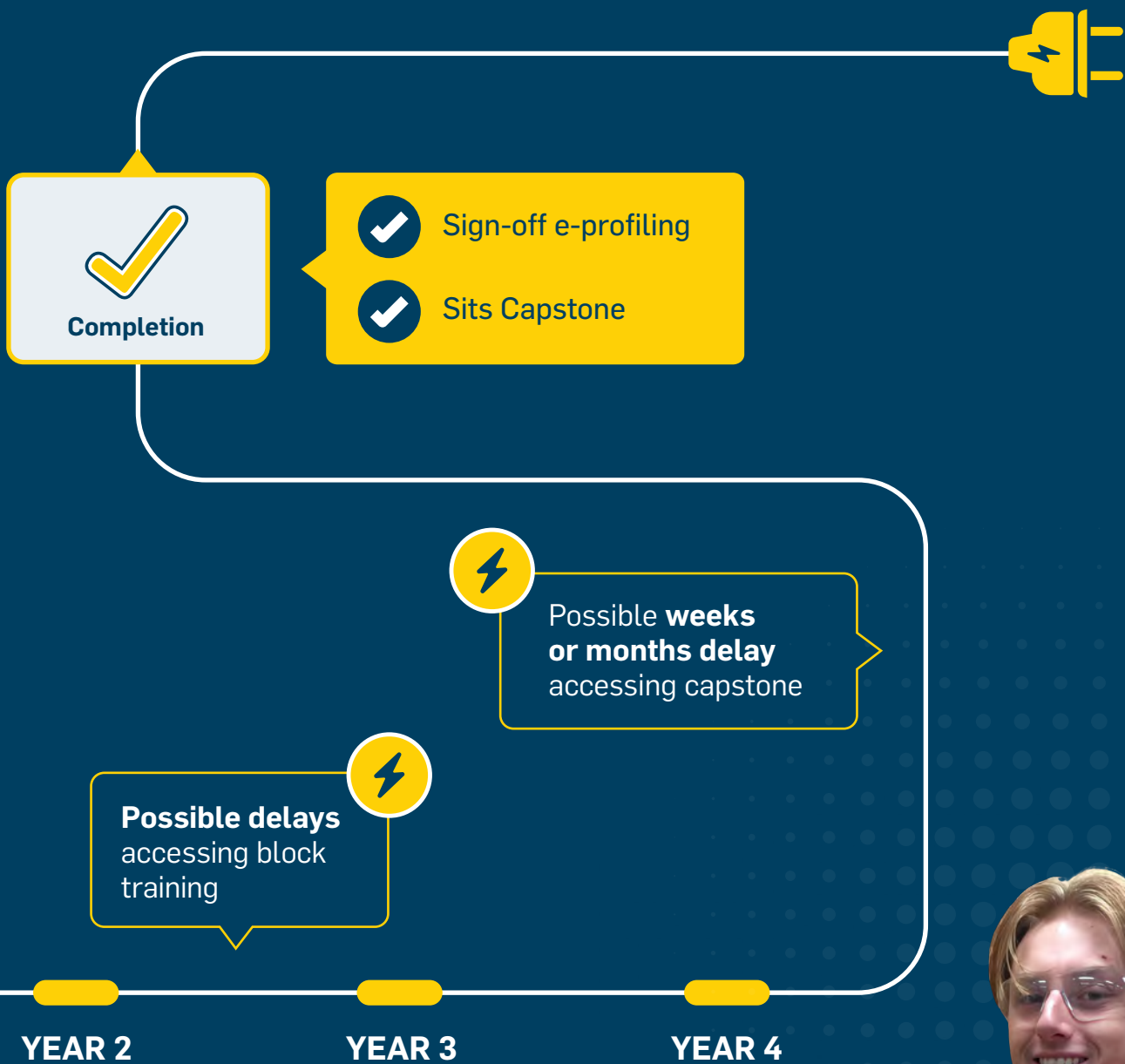


Commence Training

YEAR 1

- On Job Training + Completion of E-Profiling

¹¹ Per Capita (2024), Charged Up: Strategies for Addressing the Skill Shortage in Electrical Trades for the Clean Energy Transition, p. 15.



- **Classroom Training**
(Compulsory Units + Electives)
Block training or 1 day per week



DELAYS GETTING INTO TAFE

On current completion rates, Australia needs to recruit an additional 22,000 electrical apprentices per year to achieve its 2030 emissions and renewables targets. However, there is already a significant backlog on the books of training providers around the country. In many cases, apprentices are waiting 12 to 18 months between commencing their apprenticeship and starting their first block of training.

The ETU survey found that almost one in ten (9%) had not started classroom training until their second year or later.

Our survey correlates with numerous reports from industry showing persistent shortages. Already in 2023, the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) noted:

Students seeking to commence an electrotechnology apprenticeship are already unable to secure places in most parts of Australia, with RTOs, including TAFEs, at capacity in some cases up to 18 months in advance. In one jurisdiction, even the waiting lists have been suspended.¹²

Most recently, media reports indicate that NSW TAFE has halted its intake of critical trades — including electrotechnology — in all but six locations in greater Sydney until at least 2026.¹³ Similarly, large electrical contractors report a minimum of 6 to 9 month delays in enrolling their cohorts of apprentices in offsite training and in arranging subsequent block training to allow their apprentices to progress through their apprenticeship in a timely manner.

Recommendations

- The federal government must invest in more training places, including supporting trades people to enter the VET sector. Funding must be targeted to those centres with higher-than-average completion rates, to ensure the most productive use of government funds.
- The federal government must actively monitor the extent to which training places are responding to demand, this includes identifying capacity issues in the current system and areas of significant future growth (for example, the greater uptake of electrotechnology in renewable energy zones).

¹² NECA (2023), Submission No 20 to Jobs and Skills Australia - Industry Capacity Study Discussion Paper.

¹³ Sproul-Mellis, E. and Bower, M. (2025), "TAFE NSW halts apprentice electrician enrolments at five campuses amid 'capacity crisis'", The Daily Telegraph, July 23.



Case Study: Sam

“ So I think that was as TAFE was slowly getting their resources up and able to actually fill in their blocks cause obviously they were starved for 16 years... TAFE had an entire building that had no classes being conducted in it... basically half the rooms in the building were just tables and chairs stacked up on top of each other because they didn't have enough teachers.

Sam is an electrician who completed his apprenticeship in Queensland in July 2025 after starting his apprenticeship as an adult apprentice in 2021. Sam had three different employers in the course of his apprenticeship, spanning the domestic solar installation, electrical contracting, and rail traction.

Following issues with his first employer that significantly delayed his training, Sam enrolled in TAFE shortly after starting work with his second employer.

Sam's TAFE training was delayed by TAFE's cancellation of block releases in his second year — three-to-four-week full-time courses taken at intervals throughout the year.

Sam had no formal training in electrical safety in his first six months of work. His first induction to electrical risks and reporting of electrical incidents and shocks was part of his delegates training with the ETU.

Delays in training are putting apprentices at risk of critical injuries and even death

1/4

apprentices who are behind in their training have received a shock at work. **2x** the number of apprentices who are on track with their training.



There is no safe level of exposure to an electric shock. Any contact with electricity, even at low voltages, can cause significant injury or death. The severity of an electric shock depends on factors like the voltage, current, duration of contact, and the path the electricity takes through the body.

Electrical industries are inherently high risk. Electricity cannot be seen or smelt. Electric shocks indicate that apprentices are not being suitably trained and educated in how to stay safe in the electrotechnology industries. It is essential that those entering these industries understand the risks and how to control them.

Because of this, the following units of competency are the first subjects taught at trade school:

- **HLTAID009:** Provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
- **UEECD007:** Apply work health and safety regulations, codes and practices in the workplace.
- **UEECD0016:** Document and apply measures to control WHS risks associated with electrotechnology work.

These units of competency provide fundamental safety training, with some being prerequisites to undertake further units of competency in the package. Apprentices not undertaking the above units early in their apprenticeship creates an unacceptable risk to their health and safety.

Significantly, 8.11% of apprentices who are not on track with their training say that they do not understand the requirements to isolate, lock out and tag out circuits to be worked on compared to only 1.37% of apprentices who are on track with their training.

Electrical 'isolation' describes the procedures that ensure that the part of an electrical installation that an apprentice is working on is not 'live' or connected to a source of electrical supply. 'Lock-out and tag-out' (LOTO) describes the procedures that signal to other workers that a circuit has been isolated and physically prevent the restoration of electrical supply to that circuit while it is being worked on. An apprentice must know the process of isolation and LOTO and understand the risk associated with electrical work, know that work is being carried out safely and be armed with the ability and support to say no and ask questions if things are unclear or do not seem safe.

Delays in starting training means that apprentices are not undertaking fundamental safety training until well into their apprenticeships and is increasing the risk of them receiving a shock or worse.

This would be an unacceptable risk to the lives of apprentices at any time — let alone when we are trying to attract more people to the trade to undertake the largest electrification project in history. Even if an electric shock is not fatal, serious burns can be caused by such incidents. In some cases, these burns have caused workers to be on leave for extensive periods.



I believe I was a second year. The tradesperson — actually, I think they were also an apprentice - forgot to disconnect the capacitors from the lighting circuit before doing insulation resistance testing and didn't discharge to earth between each test of the circuit. So, as I went to reconnect, the capacitor discharged, and it gave me a shock.

- Sam

This training cannot be left to the employer. Many apprentices interviewed reported a cavalier attitude from their employer and/or supervising tradesperson to the risks associated with electrical shock.

One apprentice reported that his supervisor was convinced that receiving an electrical shock was a normal or even necessary part of the trade and would improve the apprentice's 'muscle response' to electric shock. The apprentice could not persuade the supervisor otherwise and completed his shift without medical attention after receiving a shock.

Given this, it's clear that apprentices also need to be educated on supervision requirements and be armed with the ability to say no and ask questions when they are unsure or things are clearly unsafe.

Case Study: James

James recently finished his apprenticeship in NSW, having started in 2021 at the age of 21.

“Yeah, yeah, definitely had difficulties there. So, I'd finished up my last class before capstone. I think there was about a few months wait until we got our dates for the capstone examination. Most of my mates in the class got their dates in an e-mail and I was like, 'oh, that's quite interesting. I'll give it a week. Maybe they're just rolling through.' I didn't hear anything, so I emailed [TAFE] and said, 'hey, where's my e-mail? What's the go? Am I sitting capstone? Like where am I sitting it?' and they said, 'Oh yeah, we can put you in the next slot'. So, I sat capstone a couple of months later than most of the people I had class with for four years.

Ongoing delays in training

Delays accessing training are not restricted to enrolment. Apprentices and industry report significant issues in accessing training throughout their apprenticeship and even in accessing their 'capstone' (final exam). Delays throughout their apprenticeship mean that apprentices are not finishing within the four years of the apprenticeship. This impacts on their take home wages, as they cannot transition to a qualified workers wage until they complete their capstone.

Case Study: Cameron

Cameron completed his apprenticeship as a rail traction linesworker in July 2025. Cameron's training was delivered partly by his employer and partly by TAFE Queensland. When it came time for Cameron and his fellow apprentices to be enrolled in TAFE for electrical components of the certificate, there were insufficient places in his region. Coursework that should have started in September 2021 was delayed to February 2022.

“When they tried to book us in on the TAFE side of things, they had a bit of trouble trying to book us all in - because in total of my apprenticeship cohort there was about twelve of us all up. They'd didn't have spots in the region, I think.

Cameron experienced delays in safety training that impacted his commencement of high-risk work.

“We should have done our TAFE side of things and our high-risk tickets in the first six months of our apprenticeship. Because we couldn't do any work, couldn't go up in the air and do HV enclosures or anything.

“

He's like, 'oh yeah, switch the main switch on now', but the escutcheon was off - which is a big no-no anyway, with any law of power. I think I had my hand just touching like a bus bar or something as I switched it on. You know, I felt it straight away. Like, I just stiffened up.

- Aaron

APPRENTICE MENTORING AND SUPPORT

The apprenticeship journey is already a difficult one. Electrical work is challenging and technical, and workplaces represent unique learning opportunities.

Over 40% of apprentices do not finish their apprenticeship, with almost half of these dropping out in their first year. There is no such thing as a partial electrical apprenticeship. An apprentice who fails to complete even a single unit is unable to work as an electrician.

Workforce shortages are already putting the transition at risk. Australia cannot afford to lose almost half of all electrotechnology apprentices that start.

Mentoring and supporting energy apprentices are critical to driving up completion rates and bringing people from diverse backgrounds into the industry. Effective mentors should be identifying where apprentices are struggling with employers and/or the training system and putting in place the right supports to keep apprentices in the trade. This may include assisting an apprentice to change employers or training centres if necessary.

Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAPs) are paid in excess of \$200 million a year by taxpayers to, notionally, provide “personalised advice and support services from pre-commencement to completion”. However, they have largely failed to deliver a meaningful increase in apprenticeship completion rates.

The ACAP model — like the AASN model before it — awards contracts based on geography and not on industry or occupational specialisation. Engagement with apprentices is conducted on a largely desktop or, at most, telephone basis, typically by support workers with no lived experience of apprenticeships and minimal training in the unique challenges of the industry. Unfortunately, rather than getting tailored mentoring and support, apprentices end up speaking to call centres with inexperienced support providers.



Case Study: Rod

Rod is a fourth (final) year electrical apprentice in the Northern Territory. Rod began his apprenticeship at the age of 50 in 2021. For the first three months of his apprenticeship, there was no licenced electrician to supervise his work as his employer only held a restricted electrical licence. At no time did his ACAP check that there was a licenced tradesperson on site that could legally supervise his apprenticeship.

“ I called [my ACAP] nearly a dozen times before I finally quit from my former employer. [...] Apart from the signing of documents and I think they do come and you know, they have come into the workplace to do a couple of checks and that sort of stuff. But you know, when it comes to that [...] what apprentice is going to complain about their employer. You're really at the bottom of the ladder as an apprentice. To me [the ACAP] were a representative of the employer.

Case Study: Aimee

Aimee is a fourth-year electrical apprentice in Certificate III — Electrotechnology (Electrician) employed in the lift industry in New South Wales. Aimee started her apprenticeship at the age of 26. Aimee does not recall who her Apprenticeship Connect Australia Provider (ACAP) was but recalls receiving multiple calls from them throughout her apprenticeship offering support. On the one occasion that Aimee once asked for specific apprenticeship information:

“ I asked a question [about the apprenticeship] and they didn't have any information on it, and they told me to google it.

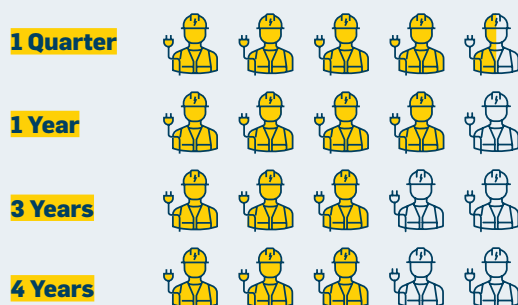
After that interaction, she told the ACAP to stop calling her.

Damningly, one in five apprentices surveyed could not identify which of the Commonwealth contracted ACAPs was mentoring them, even when prompted with a list of names. In a survey conducted by Essential Media in 2022, in which apprentices were not provided with a list of provider names to choose from, approximately two thirds of apprentices could not recall the name of their mentor.⁷ Furthermore, even when the apprentices interviewed could identify their ACAP, they could either not articulate the purpose of their ACAP or could only describe it in general or vague terms.

Interviewees were not selected on the basis of poor experiences with or a lack of awareness of their ACAP. Despite this, all the interviews pointed to significant gaps and inconsistencies in the support provided by their taxpayer-funded mentor. Specifically, the interviews found that ACAPs:

- Did not provide support to access training or capstone exams and failed to monitor and address training delays.
- Did not monitor or provide support for issues with required on-the job experience, including assessing the suitability of apprentices' work for their apprenticeship, checking that the employer was legally able to supervise them, and ensuring that employers signed off on e-profiling.
- Did not provide advice on or monitor employer compliance with registration, licensing or supervision requirements.
- Failed to provide timely advice on government subsidies and other material and financial supports for which they were eligible.
- Failed to provide timely advice on employment issues. They were rarely involved in disciplinary meetings, return-to-work meetings, or dismissals. When they were involved, some ACAPs acted against the apprentices' interests.
- Initiated no or infrequent check-ins on the apprentice and communicated chiefly by way of brief phone calls or email.

Almost half of electrotechnology and telecommunications apprentices and trainees will withdraw before completing their apprenticeship



Per Capita (2024), Charged Up: Strategies for Addressing the Skill Shortage in Electrical Trades for the Clean Energy Transition, p. 15.

⁷ The ETU notes that the name of the program has changed from Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) to Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAPs), but the function remains largely the same.

Many apprentices interviewed expressed a view that they would not, or did not, turn to their ACAP for support in circumstances of electrically unsafe work methods, unlicensed electrical work, workplace injury, workplace harassment, or a workplace dispute or grievance. None of the apprentices who reported having received an electric shock at work reported it to their ACAP.

While the government has taken steps to reform the apprentice support services, they failed to consult the critical stakeholders in the system: the apprentices. As a result, while the name of the program has changed, the two core issues remain. Specifically, that ACAPs are disconnected from industry and are reliant on employers for their business and are therefore reluctant to support apprentices who are having trouble with their employer. Unless this inherent conflict of interest at the heart of the ACAP model is addressed, then any changes will be superficial at best, and the system will continue to fail apprentices.

In one of the worst examples identified by the ETU, an injured apprentice called their ACAP for advice after he was threatened with dismissal for saying that he would make a worker's compensation claim. The ACAP gave no advice and offered the apprentice a meeting for two weeks later. The apprentice was dismissed the next day, in clear breach of workers compensation legislation and general protections under the Fair Work Act (see case study Aaron).



Case Study: Aaron

Aaron is a third-year electrical apprentice in Certificate III — Electrotechnology (Electrician) in Western Australia. Aaron had no prior experience in the trade when he started at age 20. He relied on his employer and the Australian Apprentice Support Network Provider (ACAP) to explain the rules and requirements of his apprenticeship, but across his training he encountered multiple systemic failures that left him exposed to legal and safety risks, caused serious injury, and ultimately led to his unlawful dismissal.

Aaron suffered an injury at work and was harassed by his employer and colleagues for reporting the injury. When Aaron proposed to make a workers compensation claim, his employer threatened to dismiss him. Aaron contacted his ACAP for advice but was told he must wait for a meeting in two weeks' time.

“ That day I called up [the ACAP], and I'm in tears again. I'm like, “I'm scared. I think I just fucked up my apprenticeship and everything” and I asked for some advice.

“ I was put through to a mentor... I was bawling my eyes out. I was like, “please, like, I don't know what's going on”. She gave me about 30 seconds on the phone, and said, “All right, we'll organise the time in two weeks”, you know, to talk to me.

After that interaction, she told the ACAP to stop calling her.

When an apprentice is dismissed, the training contract is usually terminated, effectively suspending the apprenticeship until a new employer is found. Aaron asked ACAP for advice on how to stop the training contract termination while he pursued an unfair dismissal claim. The ACAP did not provide support and instead referred him to WA's Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) Apprenticeship Office. The Apprenticeship Office stopped the training contract termination process once Aaron advised that he was challenging the dismissal.

The interviews conducted, following the latest survey, correlate with the findings of previous surveys and interviews conducted by the ETU. These were included in our submission to the Australian Apprenticeship Strategic Incentive Review.

Case study for 2024 Apprenticeship Incentive Review

The ETU recently provided support to a 16-year-old apprentice in their first eight months of their apprenticeship, who was issued with a written warning for failing to properly advise a supervisor that they were not attending work due to illness. While the apprentice had told another apprentice of their absence, they failed to tell their supervisor until later that day. While the company argued that the apprentice showed continual dishonest behaviour, they could only point to a single example in the written warning and subsequent meeting to discuss the warning. The apprentice was stood down without pay pending further disciplinary action: a patently disproportionate response to the incident, particularly considering the age of the apprentice and that they were only 8 months into an apprenticeship that they started after leaving high school.

The action was also illegal under the provisions of the training contract. At the meeting called by the employer to discuss the warning, the AASN attended but advised that they were there as an 'independent mediator'. It was unclear why the AASN, notionally assigned to the apprentice, needed to be independent.

Despite their declared independence at the meeting, and their formal role to provide apprentice support, the AASN sat on the same side as the employer and reiterated the employer's concerns but failed to support the apprentice to raise concerns with the employer about being stood down.

The apprentice was ultimately reinstated, as the employer had no legal grounds on which to terminate the training contract. However, he resigned shortly after returning to work as he was being bullied by the employer and was not receiving support from his AASN to resolve the situation. Since then, the ETU has discovered an underpayment that should have been picked up by the AASN. The apprentice was employed for six weeks without a training contract. When the training contract was signed, the start date was not backdated to the start of his employment so that it could be counted as part of the apprenticeship. As such, the apprentice should have been paid at rate of a trades assistant, resulting in an underpayment. This issue should have been picked up in ordinary due diligence performed by the AASN.⁷

Significantly, the issues members experienced under the AASN system continue under the ACAP system, suggesting that there has been no significant material change for apprentices despite the name change and retendering of the program.

ACAPs should be providing advice, direct support, and advocacy on behalf of apprentices in their network to ensure that work is safe, relevant, and appropriately supervised. Ideally, ACAPs should be engaging proactively with apprentices who are not meeting targets and identifying employers who are not meeting their obligations to apprentices. ACAPs are not fulfilling that function.

Recommendations

- Consistent with the Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System, the federal government must conduct a review of the ACAP programme ahead of the end of the initial 2-year contract period. The government must give strong regard to redesigning the ACAP programme to place the interests of apprentices at the core of its purpose; and place a tripartite industry approach at the core of its delivery.

⁷ ETU (2024), Submission to the Strategic Review of the Apprenticeship Incentive System, p. 16.



The Electrical Trades Union of Australia ('the ETU') is a division of the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union ('the CEPU'). ETU is the principal union for electrical and electrotechnology tradespeople and apprentices in Australia, representing over seventy thousand workers around the country, including apprentices.

The ETU has been a consistent advocate for better resourcing and support of electrical apprentices. Apprentices are a vulnerable cohort, comprising younger workers and workers new to the electrical industry.

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