



Senator Tony Sheldon
Chair
Education and Employment Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

10 August 2022

Dear Senator Sheldon

Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022 [Provisions] and the Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022 [Provisions]

The National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA) welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee's Inquiry into the provisions of the Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022.

NECA recognises the Bill seeks to establish a new statutory agency, Jobs and Skills Australia, to provide advice on current and emerging skills and training needs of workers and employers. NECA further understands the Inquiry will also consider the provisions of the related Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022, which will repeal the National Skills Commissioner Act if legislated.

As an association representing over 6,000 electrical contractors nationally, NECA is well placed to play a leading role in providing the skills required in Powering Australia programs, and in vocational training more widely.

As the energy sector transforms (along with technologies required to provide the infrastructure to implement the government's ambitious targets within the Government's plan for Powering Australia), NECA, its members and its training partners can provide the expertise, skilled workforce and training requirements needed to make this a success.

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In determining its position, NECA consulted with its members and key industry corporate partners to ascertain their views on what is required. There are several initiatives NECA regards as crucial.

NECA also draws the Committee's attention to previous submissions made by NECA. A significant number of industry bodies (including NECA) endorsed the creation of a national, independent Skills Standards Authority, with an industry board (four peak bodies and VET specialists, plus two experts). Such an Authority would sit independently within a federation framework or within the National Skills Commission. For context, **NECA believed the alternative, which was enacted (the transfer of Australia Industry and Skills Committee's (AISC) function to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)) could conflict with ASQA's existing roles.**

NECA strongly believes that decision should be reviewed, or responsibilities be amended to remove conflicts in the roles ASQA currently undertakes, and that further consideration of an independent body be considered. NECA is aware of a "whole of industry" response to this end being organised by other peak industry bodies. NECA's initial position is to both support such a response and to actively advocate to secure the desired outcome and removal of the perceived risks.

NECA envisages many opportunities in there being dedicated labour market analysis for the vocational training sector to ascertain and guide the future skill needs of the economy and subsequent policies to deliver those skills. The electrotechnology sector is integral Australia's economic growth, and envisages this will be clearly visible in this response.

NECA supports the government's intended direction on these matters and encourages Parliament to pass the Bill as soon as possible to facilitate the provision of a more holistic approach to workforce planning and valuable collaboration between governments and industry.

NECA envisages that Jobs and Skills Australia will develop a national workforce development strategy that identifies the skills needs of industry based on independent, evidence-based analysis of the economy. This would provide the government with the tools to ascertain the short and long term needs of the workforce to strengthen a growing economy and ensure its capacity to deliver sustainable growth.

NECA strongly recommends that Jobs and Skills Australia is maintained as an independent body that will provide advice to government on strategies and investment requirements to strengthen the VET system, including funding, to make it easier for students, training providers and employers to understand and access VET and to ensure that workforce skill needs are met.

It is vital that under the JSA there is a consolidation of labour market analysis and forecasting to ensure decisions regarding skills and training needs, skilled migration occupation lists, and employment policy and programs are well informed by data and evidence from state/territory and national levels and, most importantly, industry.

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NECA recommends the Committee support this Bill and accept NECA's input. Should further information be required, please contact NECA's Director of Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs, Kent Johns,

Yours sincerely

Oliver Judd

Chief Executive Officer

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