

THE GTO ADVANTAGE

A Value Proposition Report for
Group Training Organisations

MAY 2022





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Apprenticeship Employment Network (AEN) NSW & ACT is the industry association representing more than 30 Group Training Organisations (GTOs). As part of its role as an advisor, advocate and influencer, AEN NSW & ACT has commissioned one of Australia's leading impact organisations, Social Outcomes to develop an evidence-backed business value proposition targeting the key business audience for GTOs – both small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and large corporations.

The report analyses existing research and data regarding the role that GTOs play in advancing a skilled workforce across Australian industries and elevates the research through targeted stakeholder consultation and interviews with a sample of GTOs, Host employers, industry contacts, government stakeholders and the industry association itself.

Business value proposition summary

The first section of this report provides a succinct business value proposition designed around the top five advantages businesses experience when using a GTO service, as compared to directly employing an apprentice or trainee:

- Recruitment, selection, and induction outcomes;
- Workplace support and training outcomes;
- De-risked employment relationship and reduced administrative burden;
- Completion and employment outcomes; and
- Value for money

The value proposition journey map provides a visual representation of the business pathway and the apprentice pathway from pre-employment through to apprenticeship completion, indicating where a GTO delivers its core functions and their associated benefits.

Business value proposition evidence base

The second section of the report delivers the rationale for the business value proposition by highlighting the research behind each of the five advantages delivered by GTOs. We have collated research from over 50 papers, analysed recent data, and showcased GTO practices in the real world. It is hoped that this evidence-base will be used to help strengthen sales statements in business pitches, reactive tenders, proactive proposals, and policy/advocacy submissions.

Throughout the report, deidentified examples and case studies from GTOs are provided. While we assume that GTOs will draw on their own data and stories to illustrate their strengths, they may also wish to quote these experiences. These snippets also support business development across the network, by sharing good news stories and successful strategies attributable to GTOs.

Appendix 1 summarises the work done by GTOs to build the apprentice pipeline and the role they play in developing employment opportunities for women in trades and Indigenous Peoples given the government policy initiatives, business directed requirements, and community expectations in those areas.

Appendix 2 articulates the ways GTOs help deliver government policy imperatives, e.g.:

- GTOs help fill skills shortages;
- GTOs promote apprenticeships among equity groups;
- GTOs can help place out-of-trade apprentices;
- GTOs secure higher apprenticeship completions;
- GTOs bring policy solutions to governments; and
- GTOs support governments as Host employers

The evolving roles played by GTOs

This report focuses on the role that GTOs play as the legal employer of apprentices and trainees who are then placed in Host businesses. However, it is worth highlighting that the GTO network is increasingly diversifying its service offering and/or providing discrete model components to meet changing market needs. For example, some GTOs offer products within managed services, such as 'recruitment only' or 'mentor fee' models for businesses who wish to remain the legal employer, but who require support to fill specific capacity gaps or manage particular risks.

A regional GTO serves a large mining company who has the resources to manage areas like recruitment, payroll, and workers compensation, but does not have the expertise to provide the workplace mentoring, support and training plans required to ensure successful apprenticeship outcomes.

Quality assurance through GTO registration

Throughout this report, when we refer to GTOs, we are referring to registered GTOs – a distinction that is important in NSW where registration is not mandatory. Registration under the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001 ensures audited compliance with the Revised National Standards for GTOs (2017) which assures nationally consistent, high-quality services across three key elements:

- Recruitment, employment, and induction;
- Monitoring and supporting apprentices and trainees to completion; and
- Maintaining a sustainable GTO which is well governed and administered

The research, data and stories in this report reinforce the important role that GTOs play in supporting apprentice and trainee completions, business productivity, and the economy's workforce needs.



SECTION 1: BUSINESS VALUE PROPOSITION SUMMARY

GTOs offer the support and expertise which the evidence base suggests is required to address the multiple challenges experienced by employers in recruiting, supporting, and retaining apprentices and trainees. GTOs also take on the risk and administrative burden associated with the employment relationship. Using this apprentice/trainee-specific expertise and outsourcing these responsibilities to GTOs is often more effective and less costly than if done in-house.

Figure 1: The value proposition of a GTO service for a Host business can be summarised as follows:



Recruitment, selection, and induction outcomes

Registered GTO Service

- Specialised apprentice/trainee recruitment service with industry experience and understanding of specific employer needs
- Access to large pool of candidates developed through strong community networks (e.g., schools, career advisers, employment services) and targeted school-based programs
- Screening and preparation of candidates facilitate better match between apprentice/trainee and employer needs
- Intensive workplace/training support through induction period

Benefit

Access to apprentices/trainees who are a good fit with the business helps to fill skills needs and reduce early attrition.

Evidence

Many industries struggle to meet workforce needs, with a 42% shortage of skills across all technicians and trades workers in 2021.¹ Amongst NSW apprentices and trainees, over 20% cancel within the first 6 months and approximately 35% cancel within a year.² Research shows that relationships with schools, quality recruitment practices, pre-employment programs and preparation, as well as intensive workplace support during the early months are key to attracting the right people and reducing early attrition.³

Workplace support and training outcomes

Registered GTO Service

- Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) assessments and monitoring to support ongoing compliance
- Workplace supervision plans and regular visits provided by specialist staff who understand apprentice and workplace needs
- Arrangement of VET training contracts, obligations, scheduling, and relationships; coordination with RTOs to customise training to suit business needs; ongoing training monitoring and support
- Practical and pastoral support and advice provided to apprentices from recruitment through to completion including: developing workplace skills, routines, relationships, and behaviours; managing career development, training goals and outcomes; & supporting resolution of personal issues which can impact on working & learning
- Referral to complementary support services as relevant e.g., mental health and wellbeing

Benefit

The Host organisation can focus on its core business. Expert provision of apprentice/trainee workplace and training supports reduces burden on the Host employer, improves workplace relationships, improves productivity, and increases completion rates.

Evidence

Research shows that GTO support with WHS assessment and compliance, workplace supervision plans, training coordination and support, and holistic mentoring helps to prevent and address some of the key contributing factors to non-completion e.g. broken workplace relationships, poor workplace conditions, difficulty completing training requirements and personal issues impacting apprentice/trainee performance.⁴

De-risked employment relationship & reduced administrative burden

Registered GTO Service

- As the legal employer, GTOs take responsibility for recruitment, payroll/entitlements, human resource management and records, WHS support, insurance/compliance/claims, training contracts, regulatory requirements, and government entitlements
- Where an employer no longer requires an apprentice or finds them unsuitable, the GTO can organise a transfer to alternative workplaces
- Where an employer cannot provide the full suite of on-the-job training experiences, the GTO can organise rotation to suitable workplaces
- Where an apprentice/trainee is seeking wider experiences, the GTO can organise rotation with intention within networks

Benefit

Employer risks are the responsibility of the GTO. This reduces complexity and administrative burden whilst providing flexibility to the Host employer, and continuity for the apprentice. This has proven particularly valuable in the context of COVID-19 impacts.

Evidence

Research shows that concerns about the long-term commitment to an apprentice, together with the administrative burden and complexity of navigating apprentice payroll entitlements and subsidies, training requirements, and other government regulations, are barriers to taking on new apprentices. This is especially the case for SMEs and specialised employers.⁵ GTOs can minimise these risks.

Completion and employment outcomes

Registered GTO Service

- GTOs in NSW are achieving up to 15% higher completion rates than direct employers.⁶
- 69% of completing trade apprentices/trainees and 73% of completing non-trade apprentices stay on with their employer beyond the apprenticeship.⁷
- 94% of all trade apprentices and 88% of non-trade apprentices find a permanent job after their apprenticeship.⁸
- 76% of trade apprentices and 44% of non-trade apprentices are employed in the same occupational grouping as their apprenticeship.⁹

Benefit

Host employers retain qualified people to fill skill needs; avoid churn costs; build a quality internal workforce; and increase productivity.

Evidence

Non-completion is a key issue facing the apprenticeship and traineeship sector and the focus of many government policy initiatives.¹⁰ GTOs achieve higher completion rates than SME direct employers for both trade and non-trade occupations, and higher completions in non-trade occupations than all direct employers.¹¹ Successful apprenticeships fill skills shortages both in the specific workplace and the broader economy.¹² Increased completion rates reduce turnover costs, which are particularly high if occurring at the outset of the apprenticeship when apprentice productivity is low and supervision costs are high.¹³



Value for money

Registered GTO Service

- GTOs take on recruitment (including replacement where an apprentice is found to be unsuitable)
- GTOs manage employee on-costs (administration, insurances, payroll management, supervision etc),
- GTOs navigate the complex range of government subsidies and incentives
- Supervision and pastoral support provided by experts trained in addressing the needs of apprentices and trainees
- WHS assessments and checks to support ongoing legislative compliance.
- All workers compensation compliance and claims handled by GTO's specialised WHS advisors, without impacting the Host employer premiums
- Increased retention rates reduce turnover costs, estimated to cost at least 30% of salary, but often more at early stages of an apprenticeship¹⁴

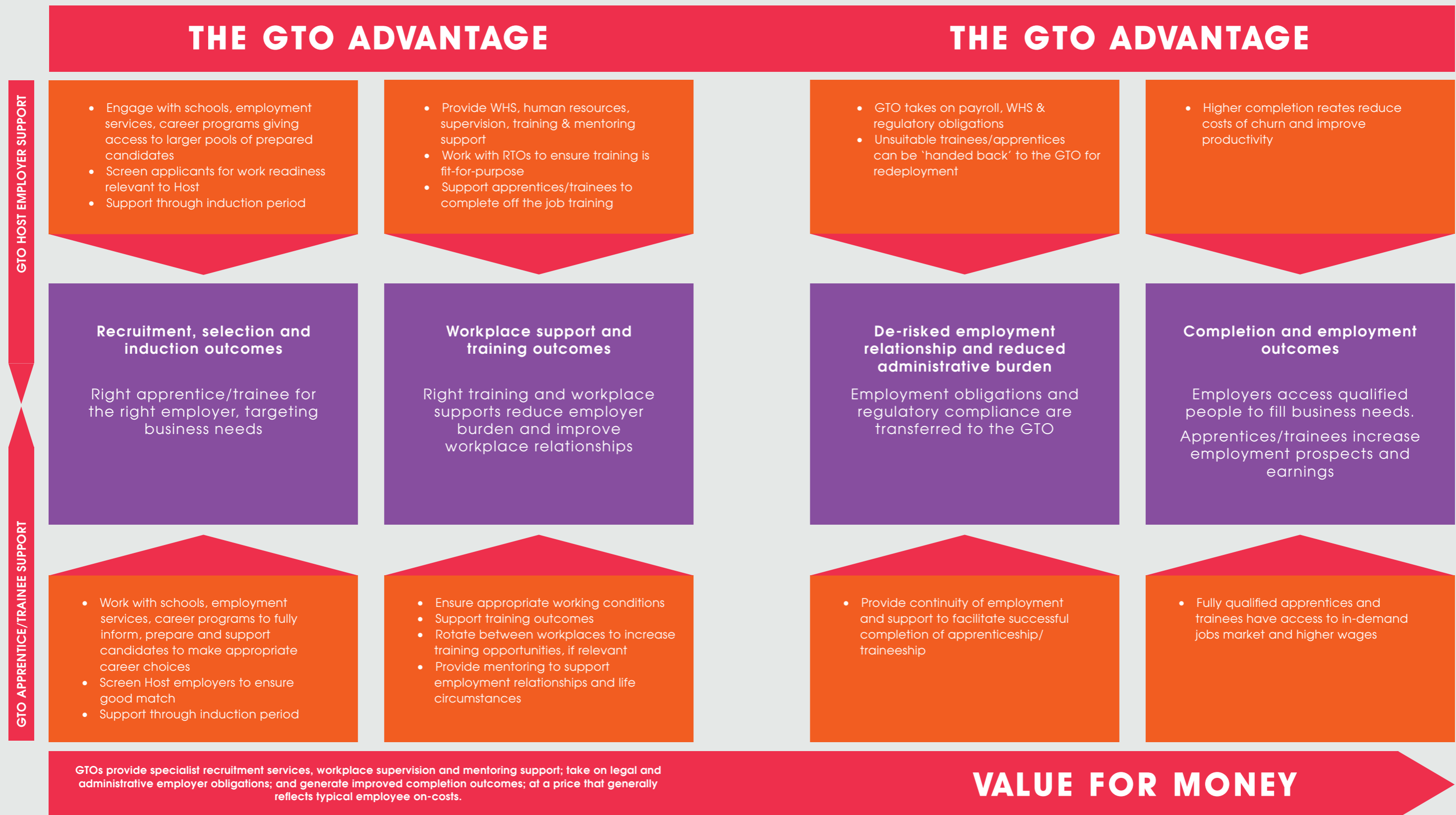
Benefit

While the cost of using GTOs generally reflects typical business on-costs associated with an employee, the value provided is significantly more. GTOs offer a cost-effective solution to addressing the recruitment, regulatory complexity, employment flexibility, pastoral support, WHS oversight, and turnover challenges associated with apprenticeships and traineeships.

Evidence

A 2015 study found that every \$1 spent by employers on GTOs generated \$1.70 in value.¹⁵ Research suggests that the most significant additional costs associated with employing apprentices lie in increased workplace supervision, personal support and turnover.¹⁶ While cost is often cited as a barrier to engaging GTOs, the specialised services they provide fill gaps that direct employers often do not have the expertise, time or financial resources to provide themselves.¹⁷ In most cases, GTOs can provide the services and take on the risks described above for less than it would cost a direct employer – be it from savings in time (e.g. recruitment, induction, RTO training plan coordination), support staff wages (e.g. admin, payroll, workplace support), cash outlays (e.g. workers compensation insurance, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or missed government entitlements).

Figure 2: Value Proposition Journey: The GTO Advantage



SECTION 2: EVIDENCE BASE FOR THE BUSINESS VALUE PROPOSITION

A. Recruitment, selection, and induction outcomes

“Suitability (for an apprenticeship) includes learning motivation, level of interest in the type of work, attitude, commitment to and passion for the work, existing skills and knowledge, previous work experience, prior level of education, work style, family background, having realistic expectations, and appreciation of the pay-off at the end of the apprenticeship... Matching student interest and disposition to careers is crucial..., yet in the past very little information about apprenticeships has been provided to school students and students were often discouraged from pursuing this pathway... Matching the ‘right’ person to the ‘right’ employer is also crucial, highlighting the importance of career counselling and pre-employment training, such as pre-apprenticeships, which give students a taste before committing to the apprenticeship. This exposure provides students with a clear understanding of the trade... helping to reduce mismatches between expectations and reality.”¹⁸

Australian and global research is clear about the role of quality recruitment in achieving successful apprenticeship/traineeship outcomes.¹⁹ High levels of early attrition and disengagement have been attributed to:²⁰

- a poor match between the interests of an apprentice/trainee and the needs of an employer;
- a failure to adequately prepare people for their new workplace and training environments; and
- weak support through the early months of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Amongst NSW apprentices and trainees, over 20% cancel within the first 6 months and approximately 35% cancel within a year.²¹ Early attrition is not only disruptive to both the apprentice and employer, it is also highly costly - the first 12 months is when the apprentice/trainee is least productive and requires the most supervision and so constant churn at these early stages can impose a very high burden in terms of time, money and productivity.²²

The Global Apprentice Network (GAN) Australia highlights the importance of supporting informed decision making amongst young people before entering an apprenticeship, to reduce these costly failures:

“If we can improve the initial choice (of the apprentice) and match with the employer we can improve the completion rates... Helping young people identify early on that they may not be suited to a particular career path would stop them from becoming disengaged and reduce the risk that they break off an apprenticeship, using up their training entitlements and leaving them without a support structure at a critical juncture. It would also save employers the cost of recruiting and training unsuitable candidates and save governments money in the long term.”²³

GTOs focus a significant amount of time in growing a well-informed apprentice pipeline, so they can serve their Host employer clients with a pool of high-quality candidates and meet government policy priorities like addressing skill shortages and engaging populations who might otherwise be disengaged.

Pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship experiences, information, and screening

GTOs have been funded by Commonwealth and State governments to develop and deliver pre-apprenticeship programs like the Training Services NSW funded Recruitment Program, and the national Multi-Industry School Based and Pre-Apprenticeship Support Project (MIP).²⁴ These programs, and others like it, are designed to provide young people with the opportunity to explore multiple apprenticeship pathways and industries so they better understand what their options are and what workplace skills, attributes and training are required to pursue different trade and non-trade careers. In the case of the MIP program, only 42% of participants said they would consider an apprenticeship prior to entering the program but 91% said they would consider it at the end of the program; 69% said they had a stronger understanding of what was involved in apprenticeships by the end of the program.²⁵

In some cases, a person who might have started out enthusiastically pursuing an apprenticeship/traineeship decides that it is not for them after completing one of these programs. GTOs acknowledge these outcomes just as positively as when a person decides to proceed with a training contract, as it avoids future instability and unnecessary cost for the young person, the Host employer, the government (in terms of wasted training funding and incentives) and the GTO itself.

At a program level, NSW Training Services, NSW TAFE, and a regional GTO are currently initiating pre-apprenticeship programs to support 45 young females in non-traditional trades. The program will target 15 young females in three regional NSW schools to progress interest in the trades with career options, coaching and support. With work experience, four TAFE units, and GTO support including PPE provision, it is hoped this program will build confidence and self-worth in these women to continue into a full trade apprenticeship.

At an individual level, the ACT Government Education Directorate has Hosted a range of traineeships which lead to longer term sustainable employment in the public service. For example, one trainee completed a Certificate III in Business as an SBAT. Following school, this young person progressed to a full-time traineeship in a Diploma of Project Management. The Directorate may have missed out on capturing this talent, had they not secured him early, prior to leaving school.

Wide candidate pool

Many industries struggle to meet workforce needs, with a 42% shortage of skills across all technicians and trades workers in 2021.²⁶ In November 2021 there were 120,900 job vacancies in NSW and 9,900 in the ACT, and 22.3% of NSW businesses and 13.4% of ACT businesses reported vacancies.²⁷ In January 2022, 68% of employers reported having difficulty in recruiting for their positions.²⁸ Businesses reported that the number one factor influencing staff shortages was an inability to find suitable employees - for small businesses this was 66%, for medium businesses 91% and large businesses 92%.²⁹

Apprentices and trainees help alleviate both labour and skills shortages over time, however it has been increasingly challenging for employers to access a pool of candidates who are ready and willing to enter training contracts. This challenge forms the basis of a range of government incentive schemes, which are briefly described in section E below.

However, independently of those government incentives, GTOs have a specific advantage over individual businesses because they develop and maintain targeted relationships with the key apprentice/trainee pipelines. In addition to running specific pre-apprenticeship and SBAT programs (see above), GTOs routinely develop relationships with school counsellors and career advisors, training providers, employment services, parent groups and the candidates themselves to engage young people who might never have worked before and do not necessarily have the skills to find or apply for jobs.

GTOs seek to attract new candidates through avenues including:

- Schools and TAFEs e.g. presentations, vacancy emails to career advisors, onsite visits;
- Community groups e.g. local media, flyers, text messaging database leads, information sessions (face to face or online), referrals;
- Job networks e.g. employment services providers;
- Social media e.g. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn - often aimed at school leavers and separately parents;
- Career advice portals e.g. skillsroad.com.au;
- Jobs boards e.g. Seek (one GTO reported a 91% success rate of successful candidates being from Seek, whilst other GTOs used a combination of strategies and more relationship-based methods than online job ads, depending on the industry and qualification).

“In pre-pandemic times, job boards like Seek and social media were the place, but now it is all about partnerships and referrals through the existing apprenticeship cohort. Often, they are better quality candidates. Our partnership with TIACS (This Is A Conversation Starter - a mental health charity focused on removing the barriers to accessing support for the blue-collar community) for example, has meant access to a strong Alliance for good leads.” GTO interview

GTOs have a specific strength in engaging with candidates who might otherwise feel disenfranchised from the standard apprenticeship system, for example there are specific initiatives to attract women into trades and Indigenous young people (see further Appendix 1).

“We are approached to find women and Indigenous apprentices to meet a company quota. We mount a more sophisticated recruitment campaign around that - this might include video pre-assessments, a physical candidate assessment centre, behavioural testing, aptitude testing, and engaging with Indigenous owners in local communities, particularly where local employment procurement policies are in place for a specific community.” GTO interview

NCVER’s National Apprentice and Trainee Data Collection shows that compared with those commencing with direct employers, apprentices and trainees commencing in 2012 and 2017 with GTOs were more likely to be:³⁰

- younger (aged under 20 years);
- newly commencing workers (who have not worked continuously for more than three months full-time or 12 months casual or part-time, or a combination of both, immediately before the commencement date of the training contract);
- in trade-related occupations;
- school-based; or
- Indigenous (although school-based and Indigenous were still a minority of all apprentices and trainees in both employer types).

“Some big businesses need support on the ground and acknowledge that they are not apprenticeship experts. The large companies also find it difficult to source diverse candidates and GTOs provide specialist help to do that, it takes a lot of effort to run targeted campaigns. They want local community procurement, not ‘head office’ recruits.” GTO interview

Familiarity with specific employer needs, apprentice goals and training requirements

“It’s about the right person for the right job in the right business” GTO interview

One of the key strengths of a GTO lies in their ‘ability to make good matches between apprentices and trainees with Hosts through their familiarity with the needs of the Host’.³¹ The long-standing relationships that GTOs have with their Host employers provide insights into the personal and practical needs of the business. And because GTOs also have relationships with local school career advisers and employment services who similarly have insights into the interests, work-readiness, skill levels and training needs of particular candidates, GTOs have more information about the potential apprentice/trainee than an employer would if they were employing directly.

“The (GTO) team have been instrumental in recruiting hard to fill apprentices in a timely and thorough manner. Their responsiveness to our needs is second to none, and we value the importance of regular dialogue and transparency throughout the recruitment process and beyond. We highly recommend engaging (a GTO) and thank them for their hard work which has rendered great success in our business” Host employer interview

GTOs also have established relationships with a range of vocational training providers and can match the requirements of the Host employer, with an appropriate training provider and course (see further section B below). Typical recruitment functions include job scoping, job advertising, skills assessment, aptitude testing and pre-screening, multiple interviews (often first interview by GTO then second interview with Host employer), reference checks, and pre-employment medical assessments. Many GTOs have formal matching processes with strength-based assessments and job matching tools.

For one industry specific GTO, this comprised a multi-stage recruitment process for apprenticeships as follows: resume ranking, aptitude testing, first interview, Harrison Assessments, Bridging the Gap practical orientation program, parent update session, final interview, medical assessment, and agreement sign off with cadet and parents.

For another GTO, this comprised creating a business specific job profile with demonstrated capabilities, identifying suitable personality traits, language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) assessments, location to worksite, distance to formal training, safety testing, interview with GTO, interview with Host employer, and pre-employment medical assessment.

Regional GTOs bring additional geographic considerations to the matching process.

Several GTOs mentioned the importance of considering the distance that a candidate would have to travel to the workplace and the training locations, as well as potential re-housing and travel costs. This helped to remove foreseeable barriers to completion.

Specialist recruitment skills

“GTOs are the ‘matchmakers’ of the sector and work hard to marry trainees and apprentices to the skills which best suit their aptitude, ability, and lifestyle.”³²
Former NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro in 2017

The recruitment process for an experienced and skilled employee is not the same thing as recruiting for an apprentice.

“(The GTO we work with) delivers good quality people. The GTO targets people who match our requirements and are suitable for the role, not just in skill set but personality and culture fit too. They take the pain out of finding people... We have fewer issues with GTO employees.” Host employer interview

GTOs have specific experience in placing candidates who may never have applied for a job before. They may not have a resume, they may never have done a job interview, and they are unlikely to know what questions to ask. They may not know what to consider before accepting a job, and the Host employer may be put off by poor interview skills despite having a good quality candidate. The GTO’s experience in coaching the apprentice and managing a Host employer’s expectations can be the difference between a good match and a bad match, or no match at all.

GTOs also bring a specialist understanding of the end-to-end expectations involved in training contracts, as well as industry specific experience regarding the particular sector skills and aptitudes required. For example, within the AEN NSW & ACT membership network, over one third of GTOs are industry specific in areas including the electrotechnology, building and construction, plumbing, forestry, maritime, business and tourism industries.

In relation to one particular GTO:

- An employer surveyed said: “We have always had quality apprentices supplied by (this GTO). We have a good relationship with all of their employees”.
- Another employer said: “They take the headache out of the recruitment and training aspect of using apprentices”.
- An apprentice said: “I wanted an apprenticeship and (this GTO) was gracious enough to offer me one. They saw my value as an employee when others didn’t.”
- Another apprentice said: “This company goes above and beyond to make sure every person they come in contact with are genuinely happy with where they are placed and make them feel belonged to a community.”

Specialist induction support

Successful recruitment extends beyond identifying and signing up an apprentice or trainee, and into the first six months of employment - when the rate of attrition is highest (see section D below on completions). The evidence suggests that successful apprenticeship outcomes rely on strong workplace relationships and support structures which will ideally be developed from the outset of the apprenticeship.³³

During the induction period, employers must: develop a detailed training plan alongside an appropriate RTO and the apprentice; ensure appropriate WHS provisions for GTO employees (and especially inexperienced employees); and provide high levels of supervision. The apprentice/trainee must learn new work routines and practices, develop new relationships, and complete new training and study requirements. And many of those apprentices/trainees may be experiencing not just a transition from school to work and training, but a transition from home to independent living - raising a whole range of practical and personal challenges.

The high levels of support and supervision that apprentices require at these early stages in the working relationship can be challenging for employers to provide either because they are time poor, or “who, despite being knowledgeable in their trade, often don’t have teaching or training experience and may not have the communication skills necessary to effectively give instructions.”³⁴ GTOs have become experts in this field.

B. Workplace support and training outcomes

There are several key elements directly linked to successful completions. These include having access to an on-the-job training experience, enjoying the job, experiencing a range of work tasks, feeling happy with the quality of training, having time to practise new skills, and experiencing a positive work environment... Social inclusion and integration into the workplace are also vital, particularly getting along with colleagues, and even more importantly, getting along with the ‘boss’ in an effective and positive relationship... Group training organisations can help by filling the mentoring gap that employers cannot provide.³⁵

Navigating and supporting training outcomes

A good training experience is a key contributing factor to increasing apprenticeship completion rates.³⁶ However, many employers experience a number of challenges in navigating the range of VET training options and, in particular, in ensuring alignment of the off-the-job training with practical training needs, qualifications and workplace scheduling requirements.³⁷ GTOs are well placed to identify the most appropriate existing training options for a particular workplace and have an in-depth knowledge of training package rules, scope of registration and industry parameters.

GTOs generally have established relationships with RTOs, and often individual trainers, which facilitates setting up the training plan, mapping on-the-job and off-the-job training, and monitoring progress. In some instances, GTOs may be able to work with RTOs to help meet specific business requirements, such as negotiating convenient training times or locations, or tailoring training packages to industry or specific employer needs.

“Our core business is mining. Hiring kids is the easy bit, but the administration that goes with it - signing people up to training contracts, organising TAFE, organising the competencies they need to do, it’s becoming a skillset of its own. It’s easier to get expertise from people whose core business is training people, not mining.” Large Host employer interview

“Our GTO is also an RTO, and they personalise the training for us and deliver onsite.”
Host employer interview

Once an appropriate training structure has been identified, many apprentices still require significant support in completing the relevant requirements. For example, some new apprentices/trainees may require assistance with fundamental language, literacy, and numeracy skills.³⁸ Others may require support in developing training goals and study skills. GTOs routinely provide this type of support; support which is often beyond the resources of the direct employer. Furthermore, where a qualification requires on-the-job training experiences which a particular employer cannot offer, GTOs can arrange for rotation to other workplaces (see further section C below).

“Everyone understands the challenge of regional training and employment, so we need to get together to create solutions. For example, training options are limited because of regionality, so we need to think outside of the box to achieve the same outcome.” Regional GTO interview

Managing employee performance



Because of the unique structure of GTOs in that they employ apprentices and trainees, but directly provide their service to Host employers, this allows for a more independent relationship to exist between the GTO and the apprentice/trainee. This relationship can focus on supervision and structures of support, beyond that traditionally associated with standard employer/employee relationships, which often focus on performance and control of expectations.³⁹

Many Host employers, and SMEs in particular, find it challenging to juggle the day-to-day running of the business with overseeing an apprentice/trainee, indeed the evidence suggests that the cost of supervision can be one of the main deterrents for a business taking on an apprentice/trainee.⁴⁰ While supervision of the technical skills remains with the Host employer, GTOs can take over many of the 'human resource' functions.⁴¹ As the employer, the GTO manages apprentice/trainee performance through structured feedback and makes regular onsite visits, anywhere from weekly to monthly to six weekly. They also manage any disciplinary action.⁴² Regular and robust supervision by a 'third' party to the workplace is considered a key contributing factor to the increased completion rates of apprentices/trainees working under GTOs.⁴³

Several GTOs noted their structured support was designed around 'the first day, first week, first month, and at least quarterly for the entire apprenticeship or traineeship', with some variation between GTOs. The intensity was greater at the beginning of employment, and tailored to individual needs, but on average visits occurred every 4-6 weeks. One GTO has a supervision plan in place for 52 visits across a four-year apprenticeship. Another GTO highlighted that they have an "in-house HR professional who also teaches the GTO field officers on what to say and how to manage HR issues, which deals with both sides of the equation - mentor and employee."

"The workplace support is very valuable – the GTO has a vested interest in the outcomes for the apprentices and trainees and the outcome for us. They are a good intermediary - their job is to look after the apprentices and trainees". Large Host employer interview

Supporting the development of positive workplace relationships and conditions



It is in the GTOs interest to ensure that the relationship between the apprentice/trainee and the Host employer is a good one, and therefore to monitor aspects of what is or is not working.⁴⁴

In 2019, 'I didn't get on with my boss or other people at work' was the highest ranking cause of non-completion of apprenticeships in trade professions with 11.9% of trade apprentices and trainees saying this was the main reason they quit (and 9.1% of all apprentices and trainees citing this as the cause - the third highest reason).⁴⁵ Furthermore, 7.7% of trade apprentices (and 7.1% of apprentices overall) cited poor working conditions as the reason they quit their apprenticeship, with bullying being observed by 35.2% of non-completers and 21.2% of completers.⁴⁶ Apprentices have cited a 'lack of respect' or being treated as 'cheap labour' as contributing factors in their decision to leave an apprenticeship.⁴⁷ And they have also reported feeling 'left on their own' with no sense of where to turn to for assistance when things are not working.⁴⁸ On the other hand, employers have reported that they are keen to understand where things may be going wrong and that 'more detailed feedback could help to provide the early warning signs for apprentices who are at risk of dropping out, offering the employer a chance to intervene'.⁴⁹

As the legal employer, the apprentice or trainee is a GTO staff member working in their client's workplace. The GTO is both responsible to the client who is paying fees for service provision, and the apprentice who is the GTO's employee. To help manage these responsibilities the GTO provides a field officer whose job it is to visit the workplace and support both parties as a supervisor, independent advisor, and problem-solver. Many of these

field officers have specific skills in identifying workplace issues and resolving conflict, and can act as neutral third parties, or otherwise bring in help where necessary.⁵⁰ They can support both the apprentice/trainee and the Host employer to manage expectations and develop workplace structures and methods designed to build constructive working relationships.

GTOs are increasingly focussing on building the capacity of the Host employers. A 2021 employer survey found 1 in 2 respondents agreed that managers need more skills to manage and support young people.⁵¹

"We try to look for new areas where we can add value, this might not even be related to the apprentice, but rather providing business templates or referrals to another service. We run a dual role model - an account manager that is about building the client relationship, as well as a field officer whose focus is on the apprentice." GTO interview

GTOs also provide specific assistance in assessing and maintaining safe workplace environments as discussed in subsequent sections.

Personal coaching and mentoring support for apprentices



As well as managing learning outcomes and employment arrangements with Host employers, mentors are managing a broad range of other complex problems beyond the workplace and learning environment which impact directly on working and learning. While the system focus is on training, the reality is that within the GTO context these issues have to be managed and form a significant part of the work of field officers and mentors. These issues can potentially be ignored in policy and practice if the focus is purely on learning. However, to do so, risks ignoring issues that influence the capacity of apprentices and trainees to learn and engage with the work environment. Again, the foundational importance of psychosocial mentoring in achieving the strategic objectives of the apprenticeship and traineeship system appears highly relevant.⁵²

As noted earlier, many new apprentices are experiencing life changing transitions from school to work and tertiary study; and even from home to independent living. Added into that is a recognition that 1 in 4 young people aged 15-24 have experienced mental illness⁵³ and that major life transitions can be triggering factors.⁵⁴

Entering an apprenticeship without completing school increases the risk of cancellation by 10%; being Indigenous increases the risk of cancellation by 41%; and having a disability or speaking a language other than English at home increases the risk of cancellation by 26% and 31% respectively.⁵⁵ The research suggests that targeted mentoring and support are a fundamental aspect of improving these outcomes.⁵⁶

"We have had several apprentices experiencing significant mental health issues – it seems to be a growing issue amongst young people. As soon as we become aware of the issue, we contact our GTO case manager who comes onsite and helps to develop a support plan together. This advisory role is invaluable to us." Host employer interview (large employer with a national footprint)

Following the suicide of a young person, we wanted to help prevent this happening again. Our GTO initiated a mental health initiative, they did the research and provided trainees with sessions with a psychologist. We have now introduced this on an annual basis. It is a partnership - they want the kids to succeed like we do, they help address issues and support hardships - it's a win-win" Host employer interview

The provision of integrated and comprehensive mentoring is part of the core business of GTO operations and a fundamentally important value-add for employers. The precise nature of the support will vary between GTOs but can be characterised as professional and career mentoring, coaching, pastoral care, Employee Assistance Program access, and/or Equity Group Support Services. For some GTOs, there may be a dedicated field officer with special training, for GTOs with cohort specialisation there may be specifically targeted supports like Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural support. Some GTOs may develop a specific care plan with a variety of additional, free support programs and referrals to specialist services like allied health, psychologists, or alcohol and other drug supports. Other GTOs have an in-house psychologist, and one GTO has worked with psychologists to develop coaching and mentoring training for field officers.

It is often very challenging for employers to provide this type of support directly.⁵⁷ This is particularly the case for SME employers but even large employers with well-resourced human resource departments have recognised the specialist skills required when working with apprentices and trainees.

When delivered well, this support should result in quality skill development, improved performance and productivity, and increased completion rates, whilst freeing up management time.

“Personal support for apprentices is fundamental to improving completions - there is no doubt at all. We invest in a good Employment Assistance Program, as well as counselling to deal with the broad range of issues young people face. This includes issues relating to attempted suicide, drug misuse, experiencing homelessness living in a car and mental health... GTO field officers need a diverse skill set.” GTO interview

C. De-risked employment relationship and reduced administrative burden

Research suggests that concerns about the long-term commitment to an apprentice, together with the administrative burden and complexity of navigating apprentice payroll entitlements and subsidies, training requirements and relationships, and other government regulations, are barriers to taking on new apprentices.⁵⁸

This is especially the case for SMEs and specialised employers, and even more so in economically uncertain times. Interviews with employers also highlight that managing the WHS risks associated with new apprentices can be challenging. On the other hand, apprentice labour advocates report widespread exploitation and mistreatment of apprentices, including bullying, refusal to pay training fees, wage theft, and poor safety conditions.⁵⁹

GTOs offer a de-risked employment relationship by taking on the employment risks which would fall on the Host business if it hired the apprentice directly. When a business uses a GTO, it is the GTO who becomes the legal employer of apprentices and trainees and it therefore becomes the GTO’s responsibility to recruit them, pay them correctly, enrol them with RTOs, ensure that they can satisfy their training requirements and that they are working under appropriate working conditions.⁶⁰ Host employers pay a fee to GTOs for this service, and they have a contract with the GTO until they cancel; but the Host employer has no contract with the apprentice or trainee, other than being heavily invested in ensuring a successful training outcome by investing in the GTO model.⁶¹



Figure 3: AEN VIC GTO relationship between parties



Taking on the continuity risk



Group training arrangements are particularly suited to small and medium sized businesses as they give the Host business the advantage of flexible staffing without the concern of long-term contracts and the apprentice or trainee is supported with continuous and broad-based work and training resulting in a national qualification.⁶²

“When things go pear shaped, GTOs come to the fore... If things go badly, especially for young people, we act as a safety net. We can redesign the qualification, it might be performance based or it might be workplace based, we work that out.” GTO interview

NCVER data suggests that 9.3% of all apprentices and trainees end their apprenticeship because they were made ‘redundant’ by a particular employer and 6.9% don’t complete because the apprenticeship was cancelled by the employer.⁶³ If an apprentice is employed by a GTO, when circumstances change, so too can the Host employer, for example:

- if the business is faced with a reduction in work, they can send the apprentice back to the GTO who will seek alternative options for them;
- if it doesn’t work out between the Host employer and apprentice/trainee, they can send the apprentice back and the GTO can find a new apprentice for the Host employer and a new Host employer for the apprentice;
- if the business does not offer the full suite of on-the-job training opportunities needed to obtain a qualification, the GTO can rotate the apprentice/trainee to other Host employers.

“We had a case of ‘clash of cultures’ between an apprentice and a supervisor. There were personal misinterpretations and misunderstandings based on cultural differences that, without GTO assistance in transferring the apprentice to an alternative workplace, would have resulted in cancellation.” GTO interview

In 2014, over 15% of GTO-employed apprentices were rotated to another Host employer annually due to varying business needs. Without the GTO, these apprenticeships would have been cancelled, and apprentices might have found it challenging to find another employer with whom to complete their training.⁶⁴

This has proven particularly valuable across the COVID-19 pandemic where government-imposed restrictions in certain industries have posed particular employment and training challenges. For example, a recent report by the Australia Institute highlights that “key VET performance indicators have not only failed to improve in the pandemic era, but in many cases have worsened.”⁶⁵ Yet, GTOs have demonstrated their ability to keep apprentices and trainees employed through rotations.

“Even during COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to rotate every person in hospitality so that nobody was left unemployed. One person was experiencing significant challenges and was rotated five times, but with intensive mentoring, was able to complete his qualification.” GTO interview

GTO pandemic related case study: One of Australia’s largest companies QANTAS started closing their services and this extended to the Jetstar brand closing the maintenance hangar at Williamtown Airport. Being a regional centre for the planes, it employed approximately 150 workers with a combination of apprentices included in the workforce. The Jetstar relocation program supported many of the workforce to transition to different parts of the country for continuity of employment. The GTO was able to meet with the impacted workers who were considering staying local and assessed their employment options. The GTO, in partnership with BAE Systems Australia, offered the apprentices to transfer over to BAE Systems. Four of the apprentices are working on the established Lead In Fighter (LIF) program while two are working on the new F-35 program. This meant that they could continue their career and stay home close to family, and friends and remain in the community. From a skills perspective, it meant that the industry skills would also remain local and not be lost from our region.⁶⁶

In addition to rotations motivated by economic downturns, some GTOs organise “rotation with intention”, whereby there is structured rotation between a set of employers to facilitate a wide range of experiences for apprentices and trainees. This has proven particularly effective where there is a generic qualification and rotation across and within industries provide an opportunity for an apprentice to see what they are actually interested in pursuing as a career, whilst maintaining continuity of the qualification.

“With some clients, we rotate with intent to ensure training diversity and the full scope of the qualification is achieved.” GTO interview

Taking on the regulatory and administrative responsibility



“It’s not worth it if it’s not your core business. The process, obligations, audits and so on are not worth doing yourself, trying to keep abreast of the changes. It’s just plain easier to do it with a GTO. Large Host employer interview

Navigating the regulatory complexity of taking on an apprentice/trainee, WHS risks and completing all the relevant training and employment paperwork required, can be overwhelming for employers, and especially smaller businesses.⁶⁷

“We don’t have to worry about the paperwork - what the GTO achieved in 8 weeks would have taken me 8 months. They take care of all the employment contracts, leave, government subsidies and so on, so we can just focus on the training. We don’t have the resources to deal with all that.” Host employer interview

As the legal employer, GTOs take on the responsibility of:

- managing apprentice payroll and entitlements (wages, taxation, superannuation, leave, employment records, etc) in line with relevant industrial relations legislation;
- navigating and accessing available incentives available to employers like wage subsidies and other government incentives;
- managing WHS assessment and compliance, workers compensation insurance and workers compensation claims management; and
- contracting with the relevant training providers and monitoring compliance.⁶⁸

This means that Host employers can focus on their core business and be reassured that all employment entitlements and training requirements are met, with additional WHS support.

“GTOs are WHS centric. This is about a safe workplace with the capacity to train, not just a cheap set of hands” GTO interview

“Apprentices are humans with power tools and so the GTO are engaging with us on safety. When there is an issue, there is no problem, it is just something to be solved, and so we get an incident report and then address it together. They support their kids so much, and we are supported in what we are doing. In the past, we may have missed something in safety, but that doesn’t happen anymore.” Host employer interview

The GTO handles the registration process including organising a training contract with an Apprenticeship Network Provider (ANP), signatures, lodgement, and approval by Training Services NSW or the ACT Education Directorate, as well as any alterations. A GTO is also across the various incentives an organisation may be entitled to, which maximises access to financial benefits in taking on and keeping an apprentice or trainee.

“Our trainee program in the education sector has been a huge success in partnership with the GTO - the relationship has grown, and we would now need so many more resources to do what they do in-house. We wouldn’t do it without them.” Host employer interview

Every year, there are both minor and major changes to Australia’s employment regulatory landscape. GTOs keep up to date with employment law changes including legislation (federal, state and territory laws); industrial instruments; and the common law, covering a range of matters that relate to the employer and employee relationship such as wages and working conditions, through to dismissal and discrimination.

The GTO ensures that their employees are treated fairly and are receiving the minimum employment rights and entitlements for the industry they work in and the job they do within that industry – including minimum pay, leave entitlements, redundancy, periods of notice for termination, and so on. This is no easy feat. For example, wage scales are calculated by applying a discount to the base rate of a qualified tradesperson. The typical four-year wage structure of a junior apprentice who has finished Year 12 is 55% of the trades base rate in the first year, 65% in the second, 75% in the third, and then 88% in the fourth.⁶⁹ Being underpaid is a common experience for many young Australian workers. 52% of young workers surveyed by Unions ACT in 2019 reported underpayment in the previous 12 months.⁷⁰

“If I had my way, all apprentices would be employed through a GTO because that means all apprentices would get the entitlements, supervision and support that they need – and that is no easy thing to achieve” Industry stakeholder interview

D. Completion and employment outcomes

“Working with GTOs gets a better completion rate and a better ‘product’. This means better apprentices because someone has looked after them, made sure they went to TAFE and did well in training, and they are guided and mentored better than if we did it ourselves. Otherwise, they would just fend for themselves, but GTOs nurture and support them through the process to get the best out of each person”. Large Host employer interview

Increasing the completion rate of apprentices and trainees is important from the perspective of the employer, the apprentice/trainee, the government, and VET providers, as summarised in the following diagram:

Figure 4: Multi-stakeholder interest in increasing completion rates



“The GTO approach is intended to facilitate apprenticeship and traineeship completion rates, successful completion being an issue of enduring concern among governments, employers, GTOs and vocational education and training (VET) providers.”⁷¹

GTOs deliver higher completions

While neither Training NSW nor NCVET currently track the comparative completion rates for apprentices/trainees employed directly vs GTOs, in 2018, across the entire apprentice and trainee population in NSW, the available data suggested that GTOs achieved a completion rate of 65% compared to 59% for those directly employed by a business.⁷² However, the way the data is collected can artificially reduce the completion numbers for GTOs. A 2019 NCVET study - Completion rates for group training organisations and direct employers: how do they compare? - highlights that an average of 7% of apprentices across Australia, and 9% of NSW apprentices, who start with GTOs, transfer to direct employment in the same occupation and complete their qualifications that way.⁷³ While this is a substantive success in terms of apprenticeships brokered by GTOs, it is recorded as a GTO ‘cancellation’ in the

data. This means that effective completion rates for NSW GTOs are up to 74%, i.e. up to 9% higher than the data reports. In other words, GTOs are achieving up to 15% higher completion rates than direct employers.

That same 2019 NCVER study also conducted a more nuanced analysis of the available data, taking into account the fact that GTOs employ more apprentices with a higher risk of non-completion including: younger, school-based, newly commencing, and Indigenous workers working in trade-based SME organisations. After adjusting for these factors and comparing like-for-like cohorts, the study found that across Australia over the years 2010-2014, GTOs achieved substantially higher completion rates than SME direct employers for both trade and non-trade occupations, and higher completions in non-trade occupations than all direct employers.⁷⁴

Over time, GTOs have delivered a high volume of completions, for example, there have been 21,115 apprentice and trainee GTO completions in NSW since 2015.⁷⁵



A number of GTOs report achieving a completion rate that is 20% higher than for apprentices and trainees directly employed by SMEs. One large GTO reported 82% completion rate for trainees and 69% for apprentices (averaging at 76%), with that number increasing to over 90% in regional areas. A Host employer with traineeships in the education sector reported a completion rate of 90+% with 65 trainees in the program. A trade-focussed GTO reported a 95% completion rate in NSW.

Completions convert into strong workforce development, employment, and further study outcomes

NCVER survey data published in 2021 reports that **94% of all trade apprentices and 88% of non-trade apprentices found a permanent job after their apprenticeship.**⁷⁶ Further, 76% of trade apprentices and 44% of non-trade apprentices are employed in the same occupational grouping as their apprenticeship, suggesting the role of apprenticeships in workforce development.⁷⁷

Interviews with Host employers suggest that one of the key motivations for taking on an apprentice or trainee is to build up the talent pipeline within a business, and so nurturing high completion rates is an important function of GTOs. Several employer interviewees highlighted how working together for 'mutual benefit in a trusted relationship' has helped to develop strong, long-term workforce planning.

One GTO states that 40% of their clients have worked with them for more than 10 years. Another Host employer explained that the 20-year partnership with their GTO has been fundamental for their ongoing workforce development.

"Approximately 90% of our trainees converted into full time employees - they become part of our business from the start - and that's the model we want... We target younger people who want to be a long-term employee. It's an extension of our talent pipeline rather than a body on the job... When promoting people, we often look within our own teams for people that are hungry or driven and want experience in different areas." Host employer interview



"We are going to try to retain every apprentice that comes through - our intention is 100% retention ... When we train our own people it's so much effort, it takes years of emotional, physical, and financial investment. I can try and hire tradesmen from labour hire, but they are all pretty ordinary. So, GTOs and labour hire are similar in terms of contracting people, but I get to train apprentices to be what I want them to be, build the team, then keep the cream of the crop." Host employer interview

Completion also brings good outcomes for apprentices and trainees. In 2019 the median income of completing apprentices increased by an average of \$15,200 when compared to the last week of their apprenticeship and was \$12,700 higher than the comparable median income for non-completers.⁷⁸ Further, 27.1% of completing apprentices and trainees enrolled in further study (5.7% at university, 9.8% at TAFE, 11.7% elsewhere), 17% of which was related to the apprenticeship.⁷⁹

When asked what was the 'main benefit' of doing an apprenticeship and traineeship, the difference in responses as between completers and non-completers is quite stark, with 73% of completers citing employment benefits compared to 40% for non-completers.⁸⁰ In addition to getting job and increased earnings, the following were mentioned as some of the 'main benefits' of undertaking an apprenticeship:

- the achievement of a qualification (28.4% cite as the main benefit)
- 'extra skills for my job' (14.7%)
- experience (8.1%)
- knowledge (7.9%)
- advancing of general skills (4.2%)
- gaining confidence (1.7%) and a promotion or increased status at work (1.6%).⁸¹

"Our GTO Hosts graduations each year for our trainees as a big celebration. After the traineeship program completes, I take six of the best trainees in the cohort and mentor them through to promotion. My whole team are trainees." Host employer interview with IT traineeships in the education sector

E. Value for money

While cost is often cited as a barrier to engaging GTOs, the specialised services they provide fill gaps that direct employers, and especially SMEs, often do not have the expertise, time, or financial resources to provide themselves.⁸² Interviews with large organisations suggested that the recruitment and workplace support expertise was a considerable value-add.

“It’s cheaper to use GTOs. If you look at the time, effort, and money it would take my team, I would need 4-5 people each getting paid more than \$100K and they would be doing the work of the GTO experts, which I can get for cheaper.” Large Host employer interview

The most recent study attempting to quantify the return on investment (ROI) for GTO services was conducted in 2015. That study found that every \$1 spent by employers on GTOs generated \$1.70 in value.⁸³ The study came to that value by considering the following categories:

- GTOs save Host employers time and money (42% of the total value created). The three outcomes created for Host employers are:
 - Finding, screening, and placing apprentice/trainees (6% of total value created)
 - Managing induction, timesheets, payroll, and entitlements (7% of total value created)
 - Managing WHS and Industrial Relations (29% of total value created)
- The fourth outcome identified that apprentice/trainees hired from GTOs are more productive (58% of the total value created). This outcome occurs because both the apprentice/trainee and Host employer receive mentoring support, which results in the Host employer being able to better manage apprentice/trainees.

While this report does not conduct a new ROI analysis, the following highlights how the value provided by GTOs is at least covered by the typical on-costs involved in hiring an apprentice or trainee directly.

GTOs provide a full suite of expert support services from recruitment through to completion, at a price generally reflecting standard employee on-costs



“It is easy for a Host business to treat these workplace functions as transactional, and that’s the hook, but there is far greater value than the technical parts like the contract and the training plan. The heart of it is the workplace-based support in having dedicated field officers and the effort invested in the Host business’ long-term workforce planning and development.” GTO interview

While the fees charged by a GTO to a business and the formula for calculating those charges varies by GTO, industry, business size (SME/large) and location (urban/regional) amongst other things, those fees generally reflect the typical on-costs incurred by a business. Many GTOs report very small margins and indeed all AEN NSW & ACT members are not-for-profit organisations.

The offset to the fees paid by a Host business includes the fact that a GTO takes on the usual administration, insurances, payroll management etc costs which are generally included in standard business calculations of employee on-costs.

A trade-based GTO has developed a ‘cost of employment’ calculator to help its Host businesses better understand the ‘true costs’ of having an apprentice on its own books (i.e., total costs above salary/wage). This helps the Host business make a more informed comparison between the costs of using a GTO and the costs of direct employment. The calculator is synchronised with a MYOB software export and allows for a real-time consideration of the following items:

Entitlements

- Fare allowances and other allowances per annum
- Annual leave loading (normally 17.5%)
- Superannuation (normally 9.5% and increasing incrementally to 12% by 2025)
- Workers compensation insurance
- Payroll tax (if applicable)
- Long service leave (if applicable for existing workers)
- Provision for redundancy
- Meal allowance
- Other costs

Business administration overhead expenses

- Accounting
- Advertising and marketing expenses
- Bank fees and interest charges
- Depreciation (including plant, buildings, and motor vehicles)
- General, insurance and legal expenses
- Motor vehicle expenses
- Office rent, maintenance, and office consumables
- PPE expenses
- Licences, fees, training, and education costs
- IT and communication expenses
- Tools, plant, and equipment expenses; water, gas, and electricity expenses
- Salaries/wages and on costs for non-chargeable staff

However, it is the additional expert support in recruitment, regulatory complexity, employment flexibility, workplace and pastoral support, WHS support, and turnover issues associated with apprenticeships and traineeships where the true value-add can be experienced, including through time savings (e.g. recruitment, induction, RTO training contract coordination, administration, payroll, workplace support), reduced cash outlays (e.g. workers compensation insurance, PPE), facilitated access to government entitlements and improved training and employment outcomes.

“The combination of all of these functions means a business is getting a HR specialist, payroll person, and WHS consultant all rolled into one”. GTO interview



“We would have had to bring on so many extra staff to run our traineeship program by ourselves that we probably wouldn’t have done it. Our partnership with (the GTO) has brought enormous value to our organisation.” Host employer interview

Value in recruitment, selection, and induction outcomes

It has been estimated the real cost of recruitment in Australia can be upwards of 50% of a person’s salary. A mistake in the recruitment process that leads to an early employee resignation or dismissal can cost an employer between half and two-thirds of the employee’s annual salary.

Hiring incurs advertising costs, recruitment fees, interview time and resources, as well as induction and administrative training expenses – without any guarantee of improved productivity. Indeed, the time it takes to hire more than doubled from 2010 to 2015 (to 68 days), resulting in average productivity losses and recruitment costs of over \$34,000.⁸⁴ In 2021, this is now an average of 82 days to fill in a vacant position, costing far more.⁸⁵ The increased time to fill a position often results in a decrease in productivity for the team and decreased revenue for the company.

Value in workplace support and training outcomes

Research suggests that the most significant additional costs associated with employing apprentices lie in increased workplace supervision, personal support, and turnover.⁸⁶ Supervision imposes some of the highest costs to apprentice/trainee employers.⁸⁷ GTOs provide dedicated field officers to assist with many of the tasks associated with supporting apprentices and trainees both in the workplace and with their training, which reduces the burden for the Host employer.

One GTO's formal supervision schedule comprises 52 visits across a 4-year apprenticeship. This comprises initial meetings, inductions and annual reinductions, diarised visits with the apprentice and Host, probation reviews, full performance reviews, formal RTO reviews and a completion meeting.

Value in de-risked employment relationship and administrative burden

Host businesses can hand back apprentices/trainees to GTOs for any reason. GTOs manage all of their payroll and entitlements, alleviating significant administrative burden, with the percentage of time lost to administration being 4.9% in Australia (2017).⁸⁸ GTOs hold aggregated risk e.g. entitlements, workers compensation/workplace injury claims which does not impact Host employer accruals and premiums. This benefit is covered in the fee paid to GTOs regardless of the Host business' WHS track record.

"I wouldn't employ any trainees or apprentices other than through a GTO - because it is not my core business - I haven't done so for years and I won't into the future" Large Host employer interview

Value in completion and employment outcomes

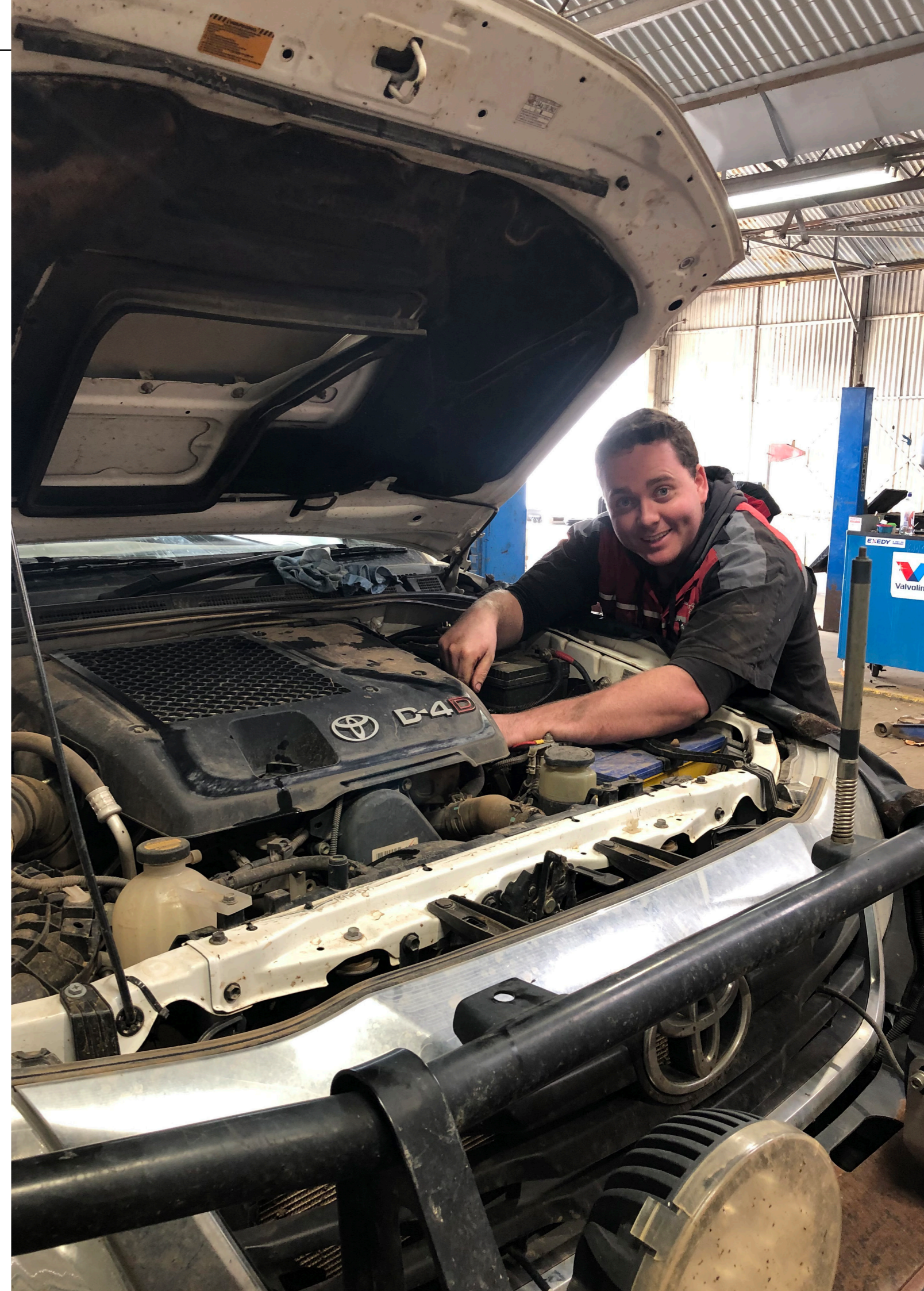
Turnover costs are estimated to cost at least 30% of salary, but often more at early stages of apprenticeship.⁸⁹ The financial cost of apprenticeship non-completion in New South Wales has been estimated at \$348 million (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011).⁹⁰

Navigating access to subsidies and incentives

Employers can miss out on government subsidies and incentives if they do not know about them. GTOs navigate the complex range of government subsidies and incentives ensuring employers can access all entitlements.

To illustrate the complexity and ever-changing nature of the incentives available, pre-2020, there was a system of over 30 available incentive payments. In October 2020, the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements (BAC) wage subsidy was introduced as a temporary measure and in October 2021, the Completing Apprenticeship Commencements (CAC) wage subsidy was introduced to support economic recovery. In 2022 the Commonwealth Government budget announced that from 2024, there will be hiring incentives of up to \$4,000 for employers (previously wage subsidies) and payments of up to \$3,000 for apprentices/trainees in priority occupations only (previously no payments).⁹¹

Whilst these subsidies and incentives are available to businesses directly employing apprentices it can be overwhelming to navigate eligibility and go through the bureaucratic processes of applying for them. GTOs are well networked to be across the current requirements of each subsidy and incentive, with streamlined processes in place to maximise benefits.





APPENDIX 1: APPRENTICESHIP/ TRAINEESHIP PIPELINE

“Collapsing enrolments and eight years of declining apprenticeship completions amid pressing skills demands makes it very clear: even with recently boosted apprenticeship and traineeship commencements, the domestic skills pipeline is in disarray... Larger flows of apprentices and trainees are required to replenish Australia’s decimated skills pipeline.”⁹²

Building relationships designed to grow the apprentice pool

“Using a GTO gives confidence to parents to know that there is a person ensuring the qualifications are right and they have protection”. Host employer interview

GTOs have ongoing relationships with some of the key influencers in those parts of the community where the groups of people most likely to be interested in apprenticeships and traineeships are located. The effort placed into building long term and trusted relationships with key influencers provides GTOs with an ‘inside-track’ to high potential candidates.

For example, the evidence suggests that parents are key influencers in whether a young person takes on an apprenticeship and can also have an impact on completion success.⁹³ When a school refers parents to a GTO as a trusted operator or invites GTOs to career fairs, the GTO has an opportunity to fully inform both the parents and the candidates and explain some of the benefits offered by GTOs which may be important to families, including:

- providing access to jobs which might not be advertised elsewhere;
- ensuring that the appropriate wages are paid;
- providing ongoing workplace and training support and mentoring; and
- employment continuity even if things do not work out with a particular employer.
- a workplace that has undergone a GTO safety audit

Case study: An AEN NSW & ACT member GTO runs a program focused on parents. The “What’s NXT for Parents” is funded through Training Services NSW. According to the GTO, 48% of teenagers turn to their parents for career advice. The purpose of the program is to help parents better understand post-school options available to their child. The session addresses pathways into Apprenticeships, Traineeships, University and VET. It also delves into the psychology around why teenagers think and behave the way they do whilst providing strategies on how to communicate with their child most effectively. The GTO:

- Explains the current job landscape, intergenerational differences, and industry changes
- Helps navigate the way through a child’s post school options
- Highlights the opportunities available to the child and how they can best provide support
- Discusses what you need to know when a child gets their first job.

Whilst this has been a pilot in one regional NSW area in 2019-20, it has been deemed a great success. Steps are in place to look at extending this focused service beyond the one region.⁹⁴

Of note is that GTOs have continued to operate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, adapting their service delivery models in line with public health regulations, to facilitate continuity for apprentices, trainees, and businesses. This is in light of a recent report which highlighted “how VET policy failure has left the skills system poorly prepared to confront the unprecedented labour market challenges gathering momentum in the COVID era: including youth unemployment and dislocation, and skills shortages (particularly in feminised, COVID-exposed caring services).”⁹⁵

GTOs focus a significant amount of time in growing the apprentice pipeline, including young people and people in service roles.

“Most GTOs are not-for-profit and are more altruistic (than direct employers). We care about what is good for the industry. Sometimes GTOs are lumped in with labour hire, but I would argue that GTOs are labour hire with a heart.” GTO interview

This Appendix summarises the role GTOs play in supporting employment opportunities for women in trades and Indigenous Peoples given the government policy initiatives, business directed requirements, and community expectations in those areas.

Supporting employment opportunities for women in trades

Women make up only 16% of all trades and technician workers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). In key industries with major skills shortages like construction, electrotechnology, and automotive industries, women make up around only 2% of the workforce. VET data show similar patterns: females made up around 10% of apprentices in 2020 largely concentrated in traditionally female-dominated industries like hairdressing.⁹⁶ Despite efforts from government and industry to tackle this issue, there has been little shift in this situation in 30 years (ABS, 2018):⁹⁷

Figure 5: Women in trade occupations over time

	1988	1998	2008	2018
Occupation	Percentage of women in occupation			
Electro technology & telecommunications trades	1.1	1.8	2.8	1.9
Construction trades (bricklaying, carpentry, painting/ decorating, metal fabrication and plumbing)	1.3	1.1	0.8	1.4
Automotive and engineering trades	1.1	0.9	1.4	1.1

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018). Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, Feb 2018, Table EQ8 Employed persons

NCVER (2019) analysis of completion rates in 2010-2013 show higher rates of completions for females than males, roughly five percentage points higher.⁹⁸ Of the 21,115 apprentice and trainee completions employed by a GTO in NSW since 2015, 32% or 6,699 were females.⁹⁹ Yet within the context of current skills shortages in Australia, attracting and retaining underutilised sources of talent, including women, is essential to economic growth and prosperity. The economic advantages of diversity and inclusive employment policies are well established and are a key strategy in especially addressing skills shortages.¹⁰⁰

The NSW Department of Education (2021) states that “GTOs can play a large role in opening up employment opportunities for women”.¹⁰¹ And while stakeholders, including GTOs, are actively developing strategies that seek to recruit more women to take up trades and maintain employment in the trades, there are few studies that have considered how women thrive and succeed in non-traditional work.

A regional NSW GTO reports that their female apprentice cohort is 11% in manual trades. This does not include trainees where there are typically higher rates of females. This is significantly higher than the table above.

Accordingly, a 2019 study investigated the areas that are fundamental to understanding how women, in regional New South Wales particularly, achieve sustainable careers in the manual trades.¹⁰² The report suggests that to increase women’s employment in the trades, “success is a complex integration of individual and organisational resilience as well as the right combination of education, social inclusion, support services and organisational practices”.

GTOs play a critical role in building individual and organisational resilience

At an individual level, aspiring female tradespeople may be reluctant to become apprentices out of concern that gender bias and a male-dominated work culture will limit their career opportunities and job satisfaction.¹⁰³ For example, AEN Victoria states that a success factor in youth career programs is meaningful program design with underrepresented groups including women in non-traditional trades, such as allowing year 10 to 12 students to explore three to five different trades/industries.¹⁰⁴

And in fact, Training Services NSW (2020) reports that women who successfully train and qualify as tradespeople consistently report high job satisfaction and career success.¹⁰⁵ By working with schools and apprentice influencers, GTOs can help change the narrative, and facilitate opportunities for young women to consider trade apprenticeships as a career pathway.

A regional GTO helps manage the Sarah Lloyd Scholarship Fund, aimed at supporting women who wish to work in non-traditional trades. The Fund provides a scholarship and mentoring support towards apprenticeships. Five scholarships have been awarded in the past five years, with three recipients in 2021.

At an organisational level, evidence shows that there are deeply embedded systemic and cultural factors at play.¹⁰⁶ Aspiring female apprentices are likely to have more difficulty finding an employer than males.¹⁰⁷ In a 2019 study of women in the automotive trade, women were more likely to get apprenticeships in workplaces where active gender diversity policies were present, and where women were known to the employers.¹⁰⁸ By working directly with Host businesses, GTOs can help influence better workplace practices, and make connections to employers, to support more women in trades.

For women who choose to commence an apprenticeship, negative workplace cultures including bullying is cited as a reason for non-completion. In fact, overall, about a quarter of apprentices observed bullying but for female non-completers it was particularly high at about 45%.¹⁰⁹ With the dedicated mentoring support GTOs provide, and the liaison role they play with the Host business, GTOs are well placed to intervene in a more independent relationship where bullying may be an issue between Host employer and apprentice, in both prevention and early intervention.

An ACT Government representative showcased a ‘Women in Construction Pathways Program’ for young women in school-based apprenticeships, supported by a GTO in partnership with the National Association of Women in Construction. These young people were enrolled in a generic qualification, however rotated to different roles every 12 weeks for two years for exposure to a wide range of experiences in different occupations, e.g., plumbing, electrician, project manager. It was deemed an “incredibly successful project” as a result of the wrap-around support provided by the GTO in both mentoring young women but also workplace support in understanding how to manage young females in the workplace. The variety of experiences saw some students change their mind in career direction, e.g., from carpentry to plumbing, but completed, with a consistent employer throughout the rotations: “There is no way that that could have happened without a GTO”. The program was awarded the “ACT Industry Collaboration Award in the 2021 ACT Training Awards.

One AEN NSW & ACT GTO member has one of the highest rates of female apprenticeship placement in the state – above national average. Success factors may include the ongoing specialist mentoring and support across the full apprenticeship, often four years, with structured supervision schedules in place.

In a 2016 Australian research study, the most endorsed enabler for addressing gender imbalances in apprenticeship uptake was highly visible female role models. Networks that enabled access to role models were seen as effective in cultivating the exchange of information and possible strategies to deal with “workplace culture” factors, as well as driving career development and promotional opportunities.¹¹⁰ In a 2019 study of women in the automotive trade, women’s trades networking groups were seen by study participants as critical to improving women’s experience.¹¹¹

“I am the first female apprentice to be employed at Takle Electrical and they are extremely proud of what I am doing within their company and feel I am a leading example for females in the industry... I wish to continue on Sarah’s legacy by doing all I can to promote and raise awareness of not only the struggles that females have to deal with in non-traditional trades but also the success of other women that are excelling, defying the odds, and breaking down the stereotype that surrounds trades.” Electrical Apprentice trained through a GTO & 2019 recipient of the Sarah Lloyd Scholarship



Supporting employment opportunities for Indigenous People

As previously noted, NCVER's National Apprentice and Trainee Data Collection shows that compared with those commencing with direct employers, apprentices and trainees commencing in 2012 and 2017 with GTOs were more likely to be Indigenous.

In 2017, 13.1% of commencing apprentices and trainees with GTOs were Indigenous, compared to only 6.1% with direct employers.¹¹² Of the 21,115 apprentice and trainee completions through a GTO in NSW since 2015, 11% or 2,256 people identified as Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander.¹¹³

The National Apprenticeship Employment Network (NAEN) members employ roughly one-in-five Indigenous trainees and apprentices and approximately one-in-four Indigenous School-Based trainees and apprentices – with clear indications that market share of Indigenous employment is increasing.¹¹⁴

Whilst there are higher GTO commencements for Indigenous people, there is also high attrition. As previously stated, we know that being Indigenous increases the risk of cancellation by 41%. This is also associated with a decline in the probability of returning to training after a first cancellation (40.6% less likely than non-Indigenous to make this transition), while Indigenous persons are 52.7% more likely to make a second cancellation after returning to training.¹¹⁵

A 2014 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report on the 'Effectiveness of traineeships and apprenticeships for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population' found that what works includes the following:¹¹⁶

- Pre-apprenticeship training nearly doubles the chance of enrolment in an apprenticeship from a base of about 10% of potential students. Pre-apprenticeship training can also be associated with higher job satisfaction, although the evidence is inconclusive.
- Reviews of some Indigenous-specific training and employment programs show a positive effect on employment and education and relatively high levels of job satisfaction for participants.
- It appears that the provision of mentors reduces cancellation rates for Indigenous apprentices.

Within the AEN NSW & ACT membership network, there are two cohort specialist GTOs in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentices and trainees. One of these GTOs targets Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people specifically in the health and social services industry.

"Based on our experiences as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation – successful education, training, and employment outcomes occur when all factors of a person's life are considered and supported. Factors such as their communities, responsibilities, culture, and cultural roles, as well as family connectedness and connection to Country. We ensure that these social and cultural determinants are prioritised with our wrap-around support." AEN NSW & ACT GTO Member and ACCO¹¹⁷

GTOs are able to draw experience and expertise to help Host businesses attract and retain Indigenous apprentices and trainees. Many organisations simply do not yet hold the cultural competence required to showcase the strengths that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture brings, but also address the challenges they may experience as a result of multiple disadvantages and intergenerational trauma. Indigenous-specific GTO support includes:

- complementing the mentoring functions performed by their field officers with specialist mentoring services, including Indigenous elders and mentors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentices and trainees;¹¹⁸
- dedicated Indigenous Apprenticeship and Traineeship Networks that provide assistance with training, mentoring and cultural awareness; and
- partnerships with ACCOs to provide indigenous guidance.



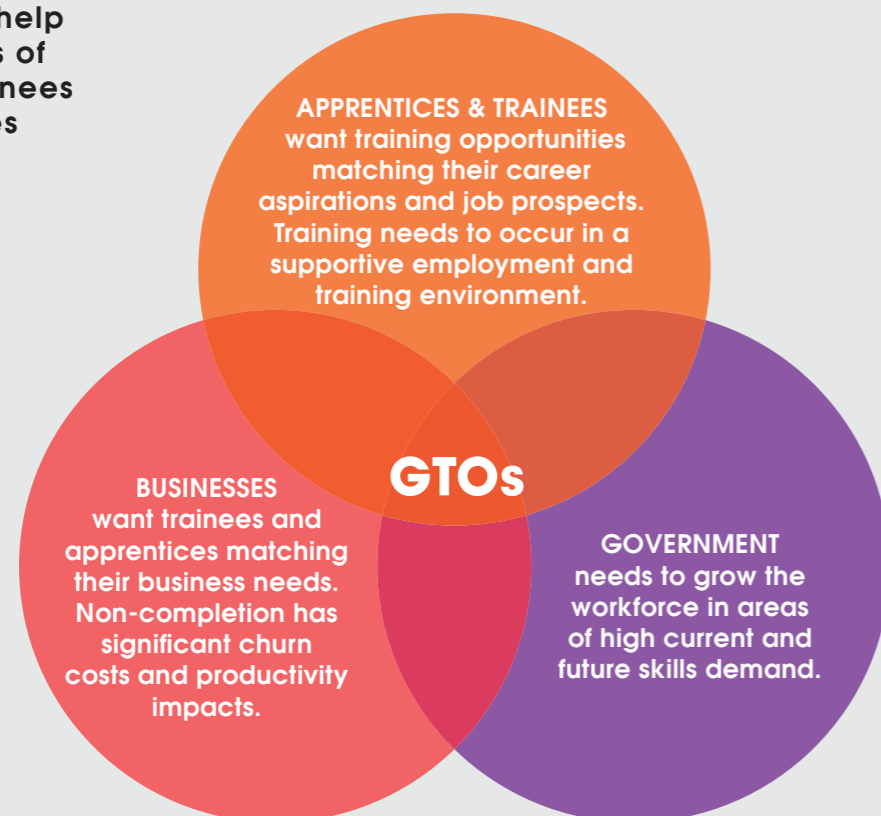
APPENDIX 2: HOW GTOs HELP TO DELIVER GOVERNMENT POLICY

“The Apprentice Employment Network and its members are the backbone of the apprenticeship and traineeship system in NSW and have been for the last 37 years.”¹¹⁹
Former NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro in 2017

The following Figure 6 briefly illustrates how GTOs can support the goals of employers, trainees/apprentices and the government. While the main body of the report focusses on how GTOs can address barriers experienced by employers and support trainees/apprentices through to completion, this Appendix briefly summarises six areas where GTOs contribute to the achievement of key government policy goals including:

- filling skill shortage gaps;
- attracting groups experiencing specific disadvantage;
- placing out-of-trade apprentices;
- increasing apprenticeship and traineeship completion rates;
- facilitating innovation in policy design;
- achieving public service training goals.

Figure 6: GTOs help meet the needs of businesses, trainees and apprentices



GTOs help fill skills shortages

“Minimising the incidence and severity of skill shortages, and unemployment resulting from skill mismatches, through improved identification of current and future skill needs and appropriate responses, can have important benefits for enterprises, the economy and society more broadly. This is an appropriate and important role for government.”¹²⁰

In 2021, 90% of medium and large businesses report that the number one reason for skills shortages was the inability to find suitable staff.¹²¹ GTOs help fill skills shortages, with 2021 AEN NSW & ACT GTO members operating across industries including those with projected skills growth (marked with an Asterisk). In NSW this is automotive, construction*, electrical, engineering, business* and in the ACT this is electrical, construction*, carpentry, business*, community services*.¹²²

GTOs promote apprenticeships among equity groups

Training and employment of equity groups promotes economic inclusion and provides long term cost savings to governments when certain cohorts, who may otherwise be more likely to become reliant on government welfare, are upskilled and employed. (See also Appendix 1 for supporting employment opportunities for women in trades and Indigenous Peoples).

The current Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program provides an indication of the cohorts that are of most interest to the Commonwealth Government in incentivising (separate from qualification level or priority occupations).¹²³

These comprise:

- People from rural and regional areas including declared drought areas;
- Mature aged workers (disadvantaged people aged 45 years or more);
- Young people (school-based apprenticeships); and
- People with a disability.

The Commonwealth Government also funds the Indigenous Apprenticeships Program as a pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to start their career in the Australian Public Service (APS) as direct employers.¹²⁴

NSW State based GTO funded programs focus on the following cohorts:

- Women in trades; and
- School students.

As previously discussed, NCVER data show that GTOs employ a greater proportion of school based, younger people, and Indigenous apprentices.¹²⁵ These apprentices and trainees are employed and contribute to the economy, rather than to welfare dependency. From the Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare 2018 valuation (pre-COVID-19), the total lifetime cost of Working Age People receiving Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance was \$471 billion, or \$11,500 average payment in 2017-18, for an average lifetime cost of \$380,000.¹²⁶ Thus, for each apprentice employed, there are significant savings to the government.

For one regional NSW GTO, the total public and private human capital value of all graduates that completed studies at this GTO in 2017-18 is estimated at 46.818 million. Overall, the value of human capital for 2017-18 is comprised of \$25.045 million in private human capital and \$21.773 million in public human capital.

In terms of youth unemployment, a recent report on rebuilding career paths for young people highlights that “employers told us that they want to see more coherent and comprehensive intermediary support” and that “there is a need for support structures to help navigate the system which many feel are currently lacking. Employers spoke of a desire for brokers and/or intermediary support aimed at addressing employer issues”.¹²⁷ GTOs already play that intermediary role for businesses.

GTOs can help place out-of-trade apprentices

When there are economic downturns, apprentices may be let go by Host businesses. As previously stated, in 2014, over 15% of GTO-employed apprentices are rotated to another Host employer annually due to varying business needs.¹²⁸ This is clearly a concern to governments evidenced by investment in initiatives such as the NSW Government's Continuing Apprentices Placement Service (CAPS) register, a service where employers can find and recruit apprentices and trainees unemployed due to economic downturn, only available to apprentices and trainees in the National Skills Need List occupations.¹²⁹

For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted apprentices and trainees in training and employment.¹³⁰ Where a Host business no longer requires an apprentice, the GTO can organise a transfer to an alternative workplace. This rotation of displaced apprentices supports solutions for government within existing structures, as described in section 2 above.

GTOs secure higher apprenticeship completions

The NSW Productivity Commission White Paper (2021) notes that:

“For years, governments have recognised the serious shortage of tradespeople across Australia and New South Wales. But policy efforts have focused narrowly on lifting apprenticeship uptake through employer and student incentives. In 2019, employer incentives made up 9 per cent (almost \$600 million) of total government expenditure in VET. Although the market for apprentices is reasonably responsive to these incentives, apprenticeship attrition rates remain high, and skills shortages remain unaddressed (Misko, 2020).”¹³¹

While this focus has been on apprenticeships commencements, GAN Australia (2019) states that “maximising apprenticeship and traineeship completion rates are a longstanding concern for governments, in that they represent the return on significant government investment in training. Similarly, the 2022 report on the ‘Failures of Australian Skills Policy Through COVID’ highlights the need to grow the apprentice pipeline both in terms of commencements, completions and employment in areas where there are currently skills gaps.¹³² That report also highlights that:

“Apprenticeships are not just about assigning workers to employers. There must exist adequate public funding and regulation of both training and employment components to generate genuine relationships between all contractual parties – employer, employee, and training provider. At a minimum, policy must ensure there is accessible quality off-site training, employer commitment to resourcing real on-site instruction over multiple years, and employee compensation at legal rates. An employer should also intend to retain the apprentice once they are qualified in their chosen field.”¹³³

As discussed in this report, the data suggests that using GTOs to employ apprentices and trainees will result in higher completion rates and ongoing employment outcomes.

GTOs bring new policy solutions to governments

“GTOs place apprentices with suitable Host employers and this is critical to the State’s successful VET system”¹³⁴ Former NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro

An interview with Training Services NSW highlighted the significant value placed on the market intelligence brought to government by GTOs, and their reach to industry and employers. In NSW, the government works with GTOs to test and deliver new programs designed to satisfy policy imperatives e.g. recruitment and retention projects, projects designed to increase participation of women in trades, and projects testing alternative VET pathways. In the ACT, existing grant programs include the Future Skills for Future Jobs with the goal of increasing apprenticeship commencement and completions.

AEN NSW & ACT were engaged by Skills Canberra in June 2018 to December 2019 to manage an ACT Government initiative aiming to increase Australian School Based Apprentices (ASBAs) in the ACT. Partner GTOs supported 93 young people in ACT public schools get a head start in their careers under this initiative, including 17 placements for students with a disability and 10 placements for Indigenous students.

Some larger GTOs have the ability to scale and deliver on policy initiatives for governments, as a “one stop shop” in the end-to-end process, from fast tracked recruitment (large numbers recruited quickly) to specialist mentoring expertise.

For example, people with disability will benefit from a more robust care sector as part of a NSW Government initiative which aims to accelerate worker recruitment and enhance on-the-job training and support.¹³⁵ In August 2021, the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services announced up to 2,500 new workers will be upskilled through the first phase of More Jobs More Care to meet the demand for disability workers under the NDIS. The first phase of the \$17 million program will focus on regional areas and will support service providers to ramp up recruitment, training, and on-the-job support. An AEN NSW & ACT member GTO has been contracted to deliver the first phase of the program, which also includes a focus on providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



GTOs support governments as Host employers

GTOs offer all levels of government the same benefits as outlined for Host businesses. Those benefits most applicable to governments in using GTO services are:

- **Flexibility** - Where a Department no longer requires an apprentice or finds them unsuitable, the GTO can organise a transfer to an alternative workplace. This is particularly relevant to rotation within and across Departments and Entities, delivering surge capacity for the public sector as well as consistency of employment for the apprentice or trainee. For example, the NSW Government Department of Industry rotates internally as well as externally to Mirvac and Lendlease.
- **Workplace support** - GTOs expertise in supporting young people is recognised by Departments whose core focus is rightly on delivering on Government priorities, more than cohort specialisation in training, employment and addressing personal challenges that may arise in the course of the apprenticeship/traineeship.
- **Large scale implementation** - For example, the NSW Government are using a GTO to Host traineeships under their IT Traineeship Program for Year 12 school leavers with approximately 70 places available in 2022 across NSW with most being in the Sydney metro region. This includes two years full time employment with industry co-designed, innovative vendor specific training.

The ACT Government Education Directorate Hosts apprentices and trainees for people who wish to enter government careers. These are mostly entry level positions filled by young people with the opportunity to rotate between departments. A representative noted the benefit of workplace supervisor support in interacting with young staff, as well as the account manager role that GTOs play with one contact for the cohort of young people across directorates.

Indigenous people make up 3.3% of Australia's population yet fewer than a quarter of public service agencies have First Nations employment rates of at least 3%, more than five years after the government first set a target to increase Indigenous employees across the public sector to 3%.¹³⁶ GTOs have demonstrated experience in employing Indigenous apprentices and trainees, as demonstrated in Appendix 1.



"All of the evidence points to the fact that the more diverse your workforce is and the more inclusive it is the better it is in any measure. In any organisation these things are important but in the public sector it's really critical because the public sector obviously is there to provide services and provide policy and, in a sense, it reflects back the Australian community." Lisa Annese, Chief Executive of the Diversity Council of Australia (DCA)

In addition to Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments, Local Governments are also large employers of apprentices and trainees across a wide range of industries.

One GTO works with eleven local government regional councils and has Hosted 170 apprentices and trainees at councils across 16 industries over the past five years to November 2021



APPENDIX 3: STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

In addition to conducting a literature review, Social Outcomes conducted 13 interviews with a range of stakeholders during the development of this report. Those interviews were with senior representatives from:

- Five GTOs
- Four Host employers to GTO apprentices/trainees
- Two industry stakeholders (VET sector)
- Two government agencies (NSW and ACT)
- AEN NSW & ACT leadership
 - Jason Sultana, AEN NSW & ACT, CEO
 - Craig Randazzo, AEN NSW & ACT Board Chairperson (also CEO, Skillset - GTO)
 - Paul Naylor, AEN NSW & ACT Board Deputy Chairperson (also former CEO, Master Plumbers Apprentices Limited - GTO)
 - Jim Whiteside, AEN NSW & ACT Board Treasurer (also CEO, Australian Training Company - GTO)

The interviewees were asked to provide feedback, context and stories designed to ensure that the value proposition developed as part of this report was grounded both in the written research and everyday practise.

Social Outcomes thanks each of the interviewees for their time and valuable contributions.

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**Apprentice
Employment Network**
NSW & ACT



**social
outcomes**

Apprentice Employment Network NSW & ACT Office

30-32 Pomeroy Street
Homebush NSW 2140

PO BOX 3165
North Strathfield NSW 2137

Contact Us

Phone: 02 9746 9333

Mobile: 0419 466 584

Email: jason@aennswact.com.au

Website: www.aennswact.com.au