

State Training Services

A Guide to the Employment of Apprentices and Trainees in the NSW Public Sector

2008



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The Guide has been funded by the NSW Department of Education and Training as part of the NSW Public Sector Apprenticeship Strategy. It has been written by the NSW Public Sector Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) with the assistance of the Department of Education and Training (State Training Services) and the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Public Sector Workforce Office).

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ISBN: 978-1-921084-43-0

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Background

NSW Government agencies recruit approximately 600 apprentices each year in trades including electrical, construction, carpentry, engineering, automotive, cookery, shipwrights and horticulture.

As part of the NSW Government's commitment to increasing apprenticeship numbers in the public sector, it has established the NSW Public Sector Apprenticeship Strategy, a joint initiative of the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Public Sector Workforce Office (PSWO), under the auspices of the NSW Skills Council.

The key elements of the strategy are:

- A 10 per cent annual growth target for the employment of apprentices (an additional 60 people a year across the sector to 2010), with targets for individual agencies and priority groups to be negotiated
- A sector-wide information and awareness strategy led by DET
- Promoting competency-based training to facilitate earlier completion of apprenticeships
- Promoting public sector apprenticeships to young people
- Strengthening current training management guidelines to ensure contractors on NSW Government infrastructure projects make an appropriate investment in training.

This Guide has been developed to help increase the capacity of public sector agencies to collectively meet the targets set out in the Apprenticeship Strategy. It is aimed at human resources staff and line managers who are or may be involved in the recruitment and supervision of apprentices.

The Guide is made up of two parts:

- **Part 1** provides basic and practical information and advice to public sector agencies on how to go about employing and recruiting apprentices in NSW. It identifies the benefits of apprenticeships for the agency, the basic steps and processes involved, as well as new developments in the apprenticeship system;
- **Part 2** provides advice and information to help agencies employing apprentices to maximise the effectiveness of their investment in apprentices and improve their capacity to take on more apprentices.

While the main focus of the Strategy and this Guide is apprenticeships, it also addresses how traineeships can be effectively utilised in the public sector, including their potential for integration with apprenticeships. Approximately 3,000 traineeships are registered with State Government agencies each year.

Attachment 1 lists related documents and websites used in the development of the Guide.

Part 1: Employing an Apprentice or Trainee

1. What are Apprenticeships and Traineeships?

Apprenticeships and traineeships are jobs that combine work, structured training and formal assessment, which lead to a nationally recognised qualification by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and a Certificate of Proficiency issued by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET).

As well as the contract of employment, apprenticeships and traineeships incorporate a training contract and training plan which is signed by both the employer and apprentice/trainee and is registered with DET.

Apprenticeships generally align with traditional trades and are available in the following areas, most of which are relevant to public sector agencies:

- Automotive e.g. light and heavy vehicle such as buses and trucks
- Building and construction, cabinet making, painting, stonemasonry, plumbing
- Engineering - electrical, mechanical and fabrication engineering, refrigeration / air conditioning
- Electrotechnology e.g. electricians, electricity, gas and water supply
- Food and hospitality – cooking and baking
- Horticulture, landscaping, parks and gardens
- Shipwright – marine craft construction
- Telecommunications engineering.

The complete list of apprenticeships in NSW can be found at: https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/trainingmarket/elts/appr_search.

Just over half of the apprentices currently working in the NSW Public Sector are employed with the three major electricity generators/distributors in electrical trades. Energy Australia is the largest employer of apprentices in NSW. There are also a large number of agencies who engage small numbers of apprentices each year or as needs arise.

There are over 700 **traineeships** available in NSW from Certificate II to Diploma levels in the following areas:

- Arts and entertainment
- Automotive
- Building and construction
- Care skills
- Education
- Utilities and electro-technology
- Environment
- Forestry/timber
- Hospitality and tourism
- Manufacturing and engineering
- Transport and warehousing
- Communication and Information Technology
- Office Administration, Finance and Insurance
- Government (including Local Government).

A complete list of traineeships can be found at: https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/trainingmarket/elts/trn_search.

A list of traineeship qualifications which were developed specifically for the public sector, is provided in *Attachment 2*.

- A range of training options is available for apprenticeships and traineeships:
- Delivered completely in the workplace (for traineeships only)

- Delivered in a learning institution such as a TAFE, community based or private college
- Delivered off the job by distance education
- Customised to meet the needs of your business
- Delivered on a part-time basis (traineeships and school based apprenticeships)
- Offered while students are still at school.

Duration of Apprenticeships and Traineeships

The nominal term of an apprenticeship or traineeship is specified in a training contract. The usual nominal term of an apprenticeship is four years, including two to three years of formal training delivered by a RTO, usually one day per week or in blocks of several days during the year.

Traineeships generally range from six months to three years.

Apprentices and trainees can commence at any time. The formal training with the RTO should begin as soon as practical.

Competency-Based Progression and Completion

While apprenticeship and traineeship training contracts have a nominal duration assigned at their commencement, the date of completion is flexible within the training period and occurs when the employer certifies that the learner is competent and the RTO has issued the national qualification. As a result, it is possible to fast-track the completion of apprenticeships and traineeships, depending on the performance of the apprentice/trainee and the ability of the RTO to deliver the structured training.

In 2005, 11.6 per cent of apprentices in New South Wales completed their training early. This increased to 22 per cent in 2006 and to 26 per cent in 2007.

Competency based progression can occur throughout the term of the training contract. An apprentice or trainee may progress at a faster rate than expected under the normal nominal term depending on their ability and the scheduling of formal training with the RTO. Employers may adjust pay rates to reflect this and may be required to do so under their industrial arrangement.

2. Who can be an Apprentice or Trainee?

Apprenticeships and traineeships can be considered for any new or existing employee of any age or length of service.

New apprentices and trainees can be new recruits to your organisation or employees with less than three months full-time service or the part-time equivalent, with your agency.

Existing worker apprentices and trainees can be someone already employed by your agency for more than three months or the part-time equivalent. Many agencies have signed up existing staff as trainees to ensure all employees have a common skills base. Just over half of all traineeship commencements in the NSW public sector in 2007 were existing workers.

School based Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Students are able to undertake a traineeship or commence an apprenticeship while they are at school. School-based apprentices work part-time and undertake the first stage of their formal or off-the-job apprenticeship training whilst at school. School based trainees work part-time and complete their formal or off-the-job traineeship training by the end of the HSC year.

Both the on-the-job and off-the-job training undertaken by school-based apprentices/trainees can contribute to their HSC. Any apprenticeship or traineeship that has been deemed suitable for school students can be undertaken within a public sector organisation. Generally school-based apprentices and trainees will attend work one day per week during school terms and work full-time through part of their school holidays to complete the required on-the-job component. Students do not attend work during exam time. The program of attendance at work and formal training will be discussed at sign-up and incorporated into the apprentice's/trainee's full training plan.

Providing they have successfully completed both their on-the-job and off-the-job training program during their senior high school years, school-based apprentices will commence full-time employment as a 2nd year apprentice from January after their HSC. This would result in a school-based apprentice gaining their trade

qualification within 5 years of commencing their school-based apprenticeship. That is, after completion of the HSC, the apprentice will have up to 3 years of full-time employment as an apprentice. This period may be reduced if the apprentice gains all their on-the-job skills and off-the-job training in a shorter period of time.

There is clearly a significant advantage when students enter the workplace as a full time apprentice/trainee, as the apprentice/trainee will already have developed an understanding of the work environment. As a result, they are able to accelerate their contribution to the workplace.

Pre-apprenticeships

Pre-apprenticeships are courses which provide initial training in a particular industry or occupation. Many courses include actual workplace experience, while others provide simulated workplaces. Pre-apprenticeships prepare people for specific industries by exposing them to the expectations of workplaces employing apprentices. Pre-apprenticeships can often provide additional educational preparation for apprenticeship study, improve literacy and numeracy and provide learners with a realistic introduction to the trade.

People who complete pre-apprenticeship programmes before undertaking apprenticeships have a much higher apprenticeship completion rate than other apprentices¹. Pre-apprenticeships have also been found to be particularly helpful to Indigenous people in improving their access to apprenticeships and their prospects of successful completion.

Pre-apprenticeship courses may be organised by training providers, job network providers or group training organisations.

¹ Dr Phillip Toner, *Meeting Trade Skill Shortages through Innovation and Flexibility in the NSW VET Sector*, University of Western Sydney 2004.

From Trainee to Apprentice

As traineeships are available in a range of industries which also have trades, there are opportunities for employees to move from a traineeship into an apprenticeship. According to research², over 3,000 people progressed from traineeships to apprenticeships between 1997 and 2004. The most common pathways were in the aircraft mechanical, hospitality, metal trades (including engineering fabrication) and electrical trades, the latter three of which are present in the Public Sector.

3. The Benefits of Employing an Apprentice or Trainee

The development of a quality skilled workforce is integral to the effectiveness of your agency and its sustainability.

Skilled workers can be recruited from outside or developed within the agency or unit. By combining work with structured on and off-the-job training, and matching training to the needs of the agency or unit, apprenticeships and traineeships are an extremely effective vehicle through which an organisation can 'grow its own' skills base.

Your decision on the appropriate apprenticeship or traineeship suited to your agency should be based on an understanding of the benefits of training to your staff and the agency.

Note that.....

- Investing in training reduces operating costs, workplace inefficiencies and staff turnover. Training improves staff motivation, loyalty, productivity and service quality, thereby providing a strong foundation for the ongoing effectiveness of the agency.
- Training improves how an agency is perceived by their stakeholders.

The benefits of developing your own skills base through apprenticeships and traineeships are magnified in current labour market conditions, where there is a widespread shortage of skilled labour. In fact, the current shortage of tradespeople is partly due to reduced commitment to apprenticeships in the last couple of decades. While the private sector has the potential to attract skilled labour by offering financial incentives such as above award wages and by recruiting skilled migrants, these options are not readily available to the public sector.

For an agency, apprenticeships and traineeships also:

- Provide an effective way to train and induct new people
- Improve the productivity of new workers and accelerate their contribution to the workplace
- Help prepare people to be flexible and adaptable to meet new work methods and changing technology.

The engagement of apprentices also represents excellent public relations for your organisation and the NSW Government as a whole. It is seen by the community as providing opportunities for young people and developing the skills base for NSW.

² Toner, Meeting Trade Skill Shortages through Innovation and Flexibility in the NSW VET Sector, University of Western Sydney 2004.

Energy Australia's website (www.apprenticeships.energyaustralia.com.au/news.html) has a number of examples of very positive articles in suburban and regional press regarding its commitment to the employment of apprentices.

The Department of Commerce conducts a ceremony at Parliament House each year when the Minister welcomes new apprentices to the organisation.

For the individual, apprenticeships and traineeships provide an industry-based career path with nationally recognised qualifications.

The **flexibility of arrangements** for apprenticeships and to an even greater extent, traineeships, has increased significantly over time:

- Traineeships are offered at Certificate II, III and IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma level
- Employers have flexibility in choice of RTOs that can provide training to your apprentice or trainee
- There is flexibility around learning options such as timing, location and nature of the training to suit your agency's or unit's needs, e.g. distance education, on-line learning, training customised and delivered in the workplace
- Apprentices and trainees can be 'fast tracked' to complete an apprenticeship in less than the nominal four years – for example, in certain circumstances, it is now possible to complete Engineering (Mechanical) and Engineering (Fabrication) apprenticeships in 2 years
- Traineeships can be full-time, part-time or school-based, depending on what suits your agency.

For information about **financial incentives** available to employers of new (including school-based) and existing worker apprentices and trainees, see *Attachment 3*.

4. Importance of Workforce Diversity in the Public Sector

It is well accepted that employees from diverse backgrounds bring different perspectives, new ideas and solutions, challenge accepted views and stimulate team creativity. A reputation for providing a progressive, open and inclusive workplace can also help an agency attract and retain the best staff.

The NSW Public Sector Workforce Office (PSWO)³ notes that achieving staff diversity through pro-active employment practices can:

- Help identify new or better ways of serving your customers
- Better reflect your customer base
- Contribute to the image of your agency as a good corporate citizen
- Result in preferred employer status
- Provide agencies with an expanded pool of skilled labour for recruitment
- Increase retention of valued staff, reduce costs and build on the agency's skills-base.

³ NSW Public Sector Workforce Office, 'Equal to the task: A good practice Guide' available at www.eeo.nsw.gov.au/disabil/equal/

Apprenticeships and traineeships are a good method of introducing diversity or increasing diversity in the workplace.

Women

The representation of women in non traditional occupations, including trades has increased over the past decade. Between 1996 and 2005, the number of women in apprenticeships and traineeships increased four fold. It is a trend that is likely to continue, particularly given that females are slightly more likely than males to complete an apprenticeship or traineeship⁴.

Many public sector agencies in NSW are recruiting women through apprenticeships. The Public Sector Workforce Office is developing a Women's Employment and Development Strategy for the NSW Public Sector. One of its aims is to increase the representation of women in non traditional roles in the public sector.

As an installation inspector for Energy Australia in Muswellbrook, it's Karen Hourigan's job to check the work of other electricians, a role that carries a lot of responsibility. However, it wasn't long ago that Karen was an apprentice, studying for a Certificate III in electrotechnology.

In this male-dominated industry, Karen, 34, was the only female in her course. She topped her class and was named Apprentice of the Year 2006 by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET). This wasn't Karen's first foray in a male-dominated industry, or her first apprenticeship. After completing two years of a maths and science degree at the University of Newcastle after leaving school, she decided to follow her passion for cars and began a four-year apprenticeship as a mechanic in 1993. "My mum and dad were a bit shocked that I wanted to quit uni to do an apprenticeship but when they realised that's what I really wanted to do, they were fine," Karen says.

A decade later, she was ready for another change. "I had been working in the garage of Energy Australia for 10 years and it's only a small part of the organisation. So there is only so far that you can go in terms of advancement. I felt like a bit of a change and being at Energy Australia, electrotechnology seemed a good way to go."

As Karen is a mature-age apprentice, the others in her course were mainly younger. "Some older apprentices don't like taking orders from people who are young but you have to have an open mind. People are just there to try to give you the best knowledge they can."

Karen has now completed an Advanced Diploma in Electrical Engineering and is considering undertaking an engineering degree at university.



Mature Aged People

Research shows that Australia's population is progressively ageing, with the number of young workers entering the workforce declining and the average age of workers increasing. This means that it is becoming increasingly difficult for employers to continue to rely on the traditional younger worker pools to fill employment vacancies.

There is an opportunity to capitalise on these changes by engaging mature aged apprentices. This is a growing trend in a number of industries, as diverse as hairdressing and engineering. Between 1997 and 2003, the largest percentage increase in intake of apprentices and trainees was for males over the age of 45 years, followed by women aged 45 years and over.⁵ A significant proportion of these are existing workers (40 per cent of the commencements in 2003 in the 25 to 44 years age groups and 60 per cent of the 45 and over age groups).

Statistics provided by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) show that, of apprentices and trainees who commenced their training in 1999, 61 per cent of those aged 45 or over completed their apprenticeship or traineeship, compared to 52 per cent overall⁶.

⁴ Katrina Ball, NCVER, *Factors influencing completion of apprenticeships and traineeships*, Conference paper, Australian Labour Market Research Workshop on 6-7 December 2004

⁵ Tom Karmel, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Older Workers in apprenticeships and traineeships*, 2006

⁶ Katrina Ball and David John, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Apprentice and Trainee Completion Rates*, 2005

An added advantage with mature aged apprentices and trainees is the likelihood that they will have prior competencies and a developed work ethic, potentially reducing the time required to complete the program. For example, a number of engineering companies in the Central West region employed a group of mature aged apprentices, all of whom were able to complete welding and other qualifications in two years.

Indigenous People

The NSW Government is committed to providing Indigenous people with employment and training opportunities. The Government identifies apprenticeships and traineeships as a very effective way of bringing Indigenous people into the workforce and helping them overcome the disadvantages they often face⁷.

Indigenous people are also major clients of services provided by public sector agencies and employment of Indigenous people can help in ensuring those services are more effectively delivered to and more willingly received by those communities.

By supporting Indigenous people in apprenticeships and traineeships, your agency can maximise their chances of completing the program successfully. Options include pre-apprenticeships and mentoring. A mentoring service for Indigenous apprentices, trainees and their private or public sector employers is available through the State Training Services program '*The Way Ahead for Aboriginal People*'.

Other examples of successful initiatives introduced by government agencies include:

- Country Energy's Indigenous Employment Program
- The Sydney Opera House's Indigenous Traineeship Program
- DET's Aboriginal Employment Assistant initiative.

⁷ NSW Public Sector Workforce Office, NSW Premier's Department, '*Making it our business, Improving aboriginal employment in the NSW Public Sector, Strategic Framework and Resource Guide, 2006 - 2008*', 2006

People with Disabilities

The NSW Government is committed to having a diverse and representative workforce that will give us the skills and knowledge to offer quality service to all communities in NSW.

As a major employer in the state, the government needs to play a leadership role in meeting the commitments identified in the NSW State Plan by achieving a proportion of the employment targets:

- Closing the gap in the unemployment rate between people with a disability and the overall community by 50 per cent, or 6,000 jobs, across the NSW labour market by 2016
- Increasing the percentage of people with a mental illness aged 15-64 who are employed to 34 per cent by 2016.

A PSWO Guide⁸ describes the following benefits of employing people with a disability:

- A diverse workforce which is more representative of the needs and experience of the community being served is better placed to design and deliver quality services
- Staff with a disability cost the same.

International research⁹ shows that people with a disability have:

- On average a better attendance record than other workers
- An average or better productivity rate than other workers
- An average or better retention rate than other workers.

A recent Australian study found that the productivity of employees with a disability is similar to those without a disability, and that employees with disability have a lower number of occupational health and safety incidents and lower workers compensation costs. In addition, retention rates of employees with a disability are higher, reducing employer costs such as recruitment and training of new staff.¹⁰

'Equal to the task' notes that few employees with a disability require workplace adjustment or job redesign. Most workplace adjustments or changes to jobs are simple, cost nothing or are inexpensive, and frequently benefit other employees and the public.¹¹

Hunter Area Health Service has been successful in promoting employment opportunities for people with a disability since 1995. They maintain a partnership with a community-based (disability) labour supply service called Castle Personnel and participate in the NSW Apprenticeship for People with a Disability Program conducted by the Department of Education and Training.

Castle Personnel provides placement and support in the workplace for people with physical or intellectual disabilities. Their partnership with Hunter Area Health aims to maintain 20 permanent positions (either full-time or part-time) for people with an intellectual disability. Positions have been filled in the housekeeping and food service areas. This program is currently expanding into other areas and job classifications.

They successfully attracted funding to employ nine apprentices, bringing the number of apprentices that have completed this program to 27. Of the 27 apprentices, 13 are current apprentices, two are currently employed on a temporary basis, five completed training and have sought work elsewhere and the remaining seven have yet to complete their apprenticeships. A female apprentice gardener was named Apprentice of the Year.

⁸ NSW Public Sector Workforce Office, 'Equal to the task: A good practice Guide' available at www.eeo.nsw.gov.au/disabil/equal/

⁹ R Lester and D Cauldhiss, 'The Handicapped Worker: Seven Myths', Training and Development Journal, 1987

¹⁰ Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC). *Are people with a disability at risk at work?*, ASCC, 2007.

¹¹ NSW Public Sector Workforce Office, 'Equal to the task: A good practice Guide' viewed at www.eeo.nsw.gov.au/disabil/equal/

5. Step by Step Guide: How to Recruit, Sign up, Train and Support Apprentices and Trainees

Following is a step by step description of the process, the organisations and parties involved in apprenticeships and traineeships and their roles.

This process assumes that if you are a line manager, you have already spoken to your human resources area to determine your options and ability to employ an apprentice or trainee.

Step 1	Select your Australian Apprenticeship Centre (AAC) ▼	1800 639 629 www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au
Step 2	Recruit your apprentice or trainee ▼	Advertise internally, externally or in local schools; contact your AAC, Job Network agency or consider using a Group Training Organisation (www.nswgrouptraining.com.au)
Step 3	Choose your RTO ▼	Ask your colleagues, your AAC, your ITAB (www.nswitabs.com.au), the DET site www.det.nsw.edu.au/rtow/vto/vtoEnquiry.do?command=goToVTOSearch or State Training Services (132811)
Step 4	Arrange for AAC to visit your workplace ▼	
Step 5	AAC assists employer and learner to complete the Training Contract and Summary Training Plan ▼	AAC obtains signature of RTO on Summary Training Plan. A full training plan is required for school based apprentices and trainees
Step 6	AAC lodges Training Contract and Summary Training Plan with NSW DET – State Training Services ▼	
Step 7	State Training Services advises parties in writing ▼	
Step 8	Probationary Period ▼	
Step 9	RTO provides Full Training Plan ▼	
Step 10	On-going contact with RTO ▼	
Step 11	Ongoing monitoring by AAC and State Training Services ▼	For problems, contact your AAC or State Training Service (132 811)
Step 12	Completion	Sign the State Training Services letter to verify completion date and return it with a copy of the qualification issued by RTO

Step 1: Select your Australian Apprenticeship Centre (AAC)

AACs (formerly New Apprenticeships Centres) provide one-stop shops for those seeking to hire or become an apprentice or trainee (collectively known as Australian Apprentices by the Australian Government). AACs provide information, administrative services and support to employers and apprentices or trainees. They assist with the signing of training contracts and also assess, approve and process the payment of Australian Government employer incentives, scholarships and income support payments to eligible apprentices or trainees.

There are currently seven Australian Apprenticeship Centres operating in NSW. Speak to your Human Resources area to find out whether your agency has a preferred AAC. Alternatively, free call 1800 639 629, visit <http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/search/aacsearch.asp> or speak to your local State Training Services regional office to help you find your local AACs.

Although you do not pay any fees to it, you should choose your AAC as you would any service provider. You should speak to other employers to see what their experience has been with them, including:

- Their efficiency in processing paperwork
- Whether they provided all relevant advice and information.

You should speak to more than one AAC approved to operate in your area and confirm/check with them that:

- They have an understanding of your circumstances and requirements
- They will come to your business to complete all documentation rather than post it out
- They have offices which are readily accessible to your workplace if and when necessary.

In most cases, accessibility and responsiveness are the qualities that employers believe to be the most important in an AAC.

The AAC can advise you on:

- Suitable apprenticeships or traineeships for your organisation
- Choices of RTOs
- Australian Government incentives available.

AACs, under their current contract are required to maintain contact with the employer and apprentice/trainee throughout the term of the training contract including:

- An onsite visit at commencement
- Phone or face to face contact with the employer after 3 months to organise completion and lodgement of claim forms for incentive payments
- One phone and one onsite visit after 6 months or 12 months (these can be alternated) to ascertain progress
- A phone contact after 24 months for longer training contracts to ascertain progress
- A phone or onsite visit at completion of the training contract, to finalise the training contract and arrange completion of claim forms for incentive payments.

Step 2: Recruit your Apprentice or Trainee

Where do I find an apprentice or trainee?

You should approach the recruitment of apprentices or trainees in the same way you do other staff.

- Broadly, the main sources of new apprentices and trainees are:
- School students
- School leavers
- The general labour market
- Staff within your own or another public sector agency. Your staff may wish to refer a friend or acquaintance to an apprenticeship or traineeship opportunity and should not be overlooked as an internal recruitment source.

There are a number of ways in which agencies can recruit new apprentices or trainees. Agencies can:

- Advertise vacancies in local and metropolitan newspapers and specialist press

Agencies based in regions, such as Country Energy, favour using local press.

- Online through www.jobs.nsw.gov.au
- Seek the assistance of an Australian Apprenticeship Centre or Job Network agency
- Contact a careers advisor at your local secondary school for details of students who may be interested in a school based apprenticeship or traineeship. Encourage school students to explore apprenticeship and traineeship options on the NSW State Government's *Choose your own Adventure* website at www.chooseyourownadventure.com.au

The most successful users of apprenticeships and traineeships make a point of establishing close relationships with schools, for instance by providing demonstrations of trades to students, participation in careers days and other activities.

- Use a Group Training Organisation which is responsible for recruiting the apprentice or trainee (discussed further below).

Australian Industry Group research¹² shows that the majority of the 70 apprentices employed in a range of trades whom they surveyed, had first heard about apprenticeships through their school, a family member or a friend, but most found their jobs through the internet, reflecting its growing importance as a medium for advertising jobs.

Regardless of recruitment method, agencies should utilise merit based selection processes and consider targeting the recruitment of apprentices and trainees from identified EEO groups. As mentioned in Section 4, there are also benefits in considering non-traditional applicants for the position. Remember that apprenticeships and traineeships are being increasingly used by people re-entering the workforce after an absence, looking to get additional skills or changing careers.

¹² Australian Industry Group and Department of Education, Science and Training, *A Guide to Managing the First 100 days of an Apprenticeship*, 2007

The NSW Government has developed 'Careers that Count' as a brand for employment in the NSW Public Sector. You may incorporate that logo in any advertising you use.

Group training options

As an alternative to employing an apprentice or trainee directly, government agencies may use a Group Training Organisation (GTO) to provide the apprentice or trainee. In this case the GTO is the legal employer and the organisation where the apprentice or trainee works is a 'host' employer. The GTO selects and employs the apprentice or trainee and places them with the host employer for as long as is required (alternatively, agencies can approach a GTO with a suggested or preferred candidate they wish to host). The GTO is responsible for wages, payroll tax and workers compensation for the learner.

Apprentices or trainees employed by a GTO are not counted against the staff complement of the agency.

There are over 180 Group Training Organisations around Australia employing 40,000 apprentices and trainees hosted through over 35,000 businesses or public sector agencies.

For more information on available GTOs go to: www.grouptraining.ntis.gov.au. For information on how GTOs work and the benefits of using them, go to the website of Group Training Australia, http://www.gtaltd.com.au/career_options/career_home.html

Many NSW Government agencies use GTOs.

Thirty per cent of all apprentices west of the Blue Mountains are employed in GTOs.

Skillswest (formerly Central West Group Apprentices) is a large Group Training Organisation based in Bathurst which provides group training services to a number of NSW Government agencies, including Delta Electricity.

Separately, Skillswest conducts a joint advertising effort with Delta Electricity, which typically draws hundreds of applications for 10 to 12 positions in the region. (Delta Electricity also operates in the Hunter region and utilises a GTO in that region too). Skillswest works with Delta to select the apprentices and places other suitable candidates with other employers, sometimes in other industries.

Step 3: Choose your RTO

RTOs have the crucial role of providing the course of training to the learner. There are over 900 RTOs in NSW including TAFE and many private sector organisations. However, not all will offer traineeships and apprenticeships.

How to find an RTO

User Choice is a national policy that allows employers, together with their apprentices/trainees to select the RTO that will best meet their training needs. A list of RTOs registered and approved to deliver each apprenticeship and traineeship in NSW can be found at:

www.det.nsw.edu.au/rtow/vto/vtoEnquiry.do?command=goToVTOSearch

Information about available training providers can also be obtained from:

- Word of mouth (ask your colleagues)
- Your Australian Apprenticeships Centre (see Step 1)
- Your Industry Training Advisory Body at www.nswitabs.com
- Your local State Training Services regional office (whose role is described in Step 10 to follow).

You should approach the selection of a training provider in the same way you would any other supplier to your agency. Your RTO will be an important partner during the time your employees are being trained. You will want to assess the capacity of providers to meet the needs of your agency and those of your trainee, and to work closely with your agency.

For apprenticeships, the RTO will most likely be TAFE, although in high demand apprenticeships and in some small apprenticeship markets, employers are able to select from a small pool of RTOs which includes approved private training providers. With most traineeships, you will have a choice between TAFE and private providers. As with suppliers of any products or services, some will be more suited and responsive to your needs than others. Spending time to find the right RTO will pay dividends in the long run.

Government Skills Australia, the national Industry Skills Council for the public sector, developed the following checklist to help you decide which RTO to choose:

Has the provider an understanding of my organisation?

Does the provider have people skilled in delivering whole of government competencies as well as those for my area of business?

What sort of track record does the provider have in the industry? (Ask for a client list and check.)

Is the provider willing to adapt to my special needs or do they expect me to adapt to what they currently provide to other businesses or agencies?¹³

In discussions with RTOs, you can negotiate aspects of the training such as:

- The structure and content of the training – i.e. the selection and sequencing of units of competency (within the guidelines for the qualification)
- Where the training will be delivered
- How the training will be delivered
- When the training will occur (for example in blocks or one or two days a week) and
- Which trainers/facilitators will conduct the assessment of training?

Whichever training delivery pathway is chosen, the employer must release the learner during paid work time or provide time off the job to undertake training and assessment.

When you choose a registered and approved training provider for an apprentice or new entrant trainee, public funds will flow to that provider to subsidise the costs of the training and assessment services. Provision of the program you require may also depend on there being sufficient numbers of trainees for the RTO to offer the program. Not all diploma and advanced diploma qualifications will attract public funding.

The RTO will develop a full training plan between 6 to 12 weeks after commencement of the apprenticeship or traineeship. The training plan is used by both the employer and the training provider to schedule training and assessment and monitor the progress of training and the attainment of competence. Full training plans must be submitted with applications to establish school-based apprentices or trainees.

¹³ Government Skills Australia (2008) *Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships for the Public Sector: A Guide for employers using the Public Sector Training Package.*

Step 4: Arrange for AAC to Visit your Workplace

The apprentice or trainee must be 'signed up' within 28 days of commencement of their apprenticeship or traineeship. The AAC is required to visit the workplace to ensure this occurs. It is most important that the AAC (and not the RTO) does this, as it is a requirement of their funding contract with the Australian Government.

In this visit, the AAC is responsible for:

- Explaining the requirements of the training contract and obligations of the parties including any prerequisites or special conditions
- Overseeing and assisting where necessary the completion of the Training Contract by the approved signatory for the agency (generally as defined in delegations) and the apprentice/trainee (and their parent or guardian where the apprentice/trainee is under 18 years of age)
- Obtaining signatures of the employer, apprentice/trainee and the RTO on the Summary Training Plan
- Detailing all appropriate incentive payments available to the agency
- Explaining any State or Australian Government assistance available to the apprentice/trainee.

Step 5: AAC Assists the Employer, Learner and RTO Complete and Sign the Training Contract and Summary Training Plan

In order for an apprenticeship or traineeship to be approved, DET requires a Summary Training Plan to be developed by the RTO and signed by the employer, apprentice/trainee and the RTO. In the case of a school based apprentice or trainee, a Full Training Plan is required.

The AAC will generally liaise with the RTO to ensure that this occurs. There is a required turnaround time of 10 days for processing all paperwork and it is much more efficient for the Training Plan to be ready at the time of the AAC's initial visit to the workplace, rather than later.

A Summary Training Plan includes:

- Details of trainee/apprentice, employer, RTO, AAC
- The name of the apprenticeship/traineeship
- Commencement and expected completion dates
- Training location
- Mode of delivery.

A Full Training Plan contains, additional to the above information:

- The full list of competencies to be delivered
- Learning resources to be provided to the apprentice/trainee
- Any previous learning or competencies for which credit has been provided
- Indicative monitoring and assessment dates
- Arrangements for reporting back to the employer and apprentice/trainee
- Any indirect support arrangements to be provided by the RTO.

Step 6: AAC Lodges Training Contract and Summary Training Plan with DET – State Training Services

As noted in Step 5, the application must be lodged with DET within 10 days of signature.

State Training Services

Your local State Training Services regional office (STS) administers the apprenticeship and traineeship system in New South Wales and can provide you with assistance and information on all aspects of apprenticeship and traineeship training. For more information about the role of STS, see Step 11.

Step 7: DET Advises Parties

DET will write to the employer and apprentice/trainee informing them of the status of the application, confirming the apprenticeship/traineeship being undertaken, how long the probationary period will be and the date the Training Contract will be registered.

Step 8: Probationary Period

A probation period of between one and three months applies to most apprenticeships and traineeships. It can be extended at the request of the parties.

Within the probation period, either party can withdraw from the Training Contract by giving the appropriate period of notice as per the relevant award or industrial agreement.

The apprentice/trainee will generally enrol with the RTO during the probation period and pay the RTO the required administration fee.

Step 9: RTO Provides Full Training Plan

The Full Training Plan must be developed within six weeks of commencement of formal training (for Training Contracts with a nominal term of up to 12 months) or within 12 weeks of the commencement of formal training (for Training Contracts with a nominal term of more than 12 months).

The Full Training Plan must be developed by the RTO in consultation with the employer and the apprentice/trainee. Copies are provided to the parties.

Step 10: On-going contact with RTO

The RTO and employer should arrange scheduled regular meetings to implement and update the training plan and to discuss the apprentice/trainee's progress and assessment.

The RTO should provide regular reports to the employer/supervisor on the progress of the training and on competencies achieved. In some cases the employer/supervisor may need to initiate the request for this regular feedback. You will also need to liaise with the RTO on assessment of competencies.

Step 11: Ongoing Monitoring

The AAC and State Training Services are the key organisations responsible for ongoing monitoring of progress of the apprenticeship/traineeship. However the RTO is also responsible for regularly communicating with the employer about the progress and performance of the apprentice/trainee in training.

Australian Apprenticeship Centre (AAC)

The AAC's role in ongoing monitoring has already been described in Step 1.

DET – State Training Services

Under the NSW Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001, State Training Services staff:

- Approve or dismiss applications to establish an apprenticeship or traineeship
- Ensure that apprentices, trainees and their employers carry out their responsibilities under the Training Contract
- Visit workplaces and view employment and training records to check that apprentices and trainees are making satisfactory progress
- Help to resolve any disputes that may arise between employers and their apprentices or trainees
- Refer disputes that can't be resolved locally to the Vocational Training Tribunal
- Approve competency based completion of an apprenticeship or traineeship prior to the expected completion date, provided all requirements have been met
- Give advice about cancellation, suspension, or transfer of an apprenticeship or traineeship, or other changes to a Training Contract.

You can contact State Training Services by ringing 132 811.

An STS staff member may visit the workplace in any circumstances but especially if:

- The employer or apprentice/trainee seeks assistance to resolve a problem or dispute
- The apprentice or trainee is school based, disabled, Indigenous and/or under 18 years of age.

The employer should check with the RTO that the apprentice/trainee is attending training.

If the employer or apprentice/trainee wish to make any changes to the Training Contract or major changes to the Training Plan (e.g. changing the RTO, qualification or mode of delivery), the State Training Services regional office must be notified.

Step 12: Completion

Six weeks before the nominal end of the Training Contract, State Training Services will send a completion letter to all parties, reminding them of the imminent completion and advising them of the requirements for completion.

The employer must sign the completion letter and return it to DET, confirming whether or not the apprentice/trainee has successfully completed on and off the job training. A copy of the qualification issued by the RTO should be provided with the letter. The employer must also ensure that the apprentice/trainee receives the certificate and advise the apprentice to apply for a Licence should one be required.

6. Responsibilities of the Employer

On-the-job training requirements

The agency or unit is responsible for ensuring that the apprentice/trainee receives the instruction, practice and support they need to develop the required skills.

Employers need to allocate time in the workplace for structured training with an appropriate supervisor to consolidate and practice competencies outlined in the training plan and to enable the apprentice or trainee to develop these skills to the required industry standard.

What supervision is required?

An appropriate staff member needs to undertake the role of supervisor of the apprentice or trainee. This person needs to be appropriately qualified. For example, a trainee undertaking a Business (Office Administration) traineeship would need a supervisor with knowledge of the work area and the equipment the trainee would be expected to use. Similarly, the supervisor of an apprentice needs to be qualified in the trade the apprentice is undertaking.

There is no limit to the number of apprentices or trainees who can be employed in any one workplace as long as the employer provides adequate supervision and training for each apprentice or trainee. Some Awards stipulate ratios of supervisors to apprentices or trainees.

Any concerns about the capacity of the workplace to supervise an apprentice or trainee should be directed to State Training Services on 13 28 11.

The designated workplace supervisor is responsible under the OH&S Act for ensuring a safe and healthy environment conducive to both work and learning for apprentices and trainees.

A **formal induction** should be given to the new apprentice or trainee on their first day of duty or shortly afterwards. This is the first opportunity to welcome the apprentice or trainee to the workplace. A full list of issues to be covered in an induction is contained in *Appendix 4*.

The supervisor should provide the apprentice/trainee with:

- Every opportunity to learn the skills and acquire the knowledge of the apprenticeship/traineeship
- Access to structured on and/or off-the-job training
- Time off work to attend training where necessary
- Time at work to undertake structured training
- A safe working environment
- A work environment free from any form of harassment
- Other benefits as specified in the employment contract or industrial arrangement.

The RTO will provide the apprentice/trainee with a training record book which identifies the learning outcomes (or elements of competency) which he/she must achieve during the apprenticeship or traineeship. This is used in conjunction with the training plan mentioned earlier. The RTO will discuss the training plan with the supervisor. Some competencies may be delivered at the workplace and assessed by the RTO during a workplace visit e.g. file management, OH&S.

The supervisor needs to ensure that the apprentice or trainee has access to the full range of work required to develop the skills and industry knowledge they need to satisfy the requirements of the qualification.

The supervisor needs to observe the apprentice or trainee's progress and confirm that they are developing the required skills and knowledge in the workplace and that it is clear how all the learning outcomes or competencies are to be achieved. These outcomes should be recorded in the training record book by the supervisor as they are achieved.

It is important that the apprentice or trainee is closely supported and encouraged in the workplace as well as in the off-the-job training. It is worth noting research which shows that apprentices' expectations of a supervisor are patience, knowledge, demonstration, guidance, clear instructions, respect, fairness and good understanding in training¹⁴.

New apprentices and trainees must be closely supervised and monitored in the initial phases of their employment. They need to understand exactly what they are expected to do, the quality of work expected of them and whom to ask for assistance or guidance.

Further information on effective supervision is provided in Part B of this Guide.

The Training Advisors at your nearest STS can assist you with further information about employer obligations. They can also help with any difficulties which arise.

7. Wages and Conditions

Apprentices and New Entrant Trainees

Wages for apprentices and trainees vary according to certain characteristics, e.g. years of school completed, years of training, the type of apprenticeship or traineeship and the industry or occupation. Wages for entry level apprentices and new entrant trainees have been designed to account for the time the apprentice or trainee is undertaking training and assessment.

Mature age apprentices and trainees may warrant a higher level of salary because of the experience they bring to the position and to offset any hardship associated with having their income reduced in transferring to an apprenticeship. Some Awards applying to Public Sector agencies, such as that for Energy Australia, include a mature age pay rate.

Similarly, a new employee at a higher grade (e.g. a clerk grade 7/8) undertaking a traineeship at a diploma level may also require wages reflecting their level of responsibility.

14 Australian Industry Group and Department of Education, Science and Training, *A Guide to Managing the First 100 days of an Apprenticeship*, 2007

Existing Worker Trainees and Apprentices

Provisions for pay rates for existing employees entering apprenticeships vary from agency to agency. For instance, in the State Transit Authority, existing workers entering apprenticeships are maintained at their existing wage levels, (capped to specified unskilled occupation pay rates in the relevant Award) until the apprenticeship rate matches or exceeds that wage rate.

Existing worker trainees retain the wages and employment conditions they had prior to commencing the traineeship.

As gradings and salaries vary between agencies it is advisable to check with your human resources area for salary rates and conditions that apply to apprentices and trainees in your organisation. In certain circumstances, the Public Sector Workforce Office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet may also be able to provide advice.

As an indication, at the time of writing, the wage rate for first year apprentices up to the age of 21 in one of the major Awards covering public sector employees is \$330/week.

The Crown Employees (Public Service Training Wage) Award 2005 sets wages for trainees in the Public Service. At the time of writing, the lowest pay rate for a trainee who has completed Year 12 was \$300/week.

NOTE: You will generally treat the apprentice or trainee in the same way as all your other employees in relation to superannuation, workers compensation and other entitlements or requirements.

8. Incentives Available to Agencies

Australian Government Incentives

Australian Government incentives for employers of apprentices and trainees who commence after 1 July 2008 are no longer available to Australian and State Government departments. Statutory Authorities and Local Governments continue to be eligible for incentives. Subsidies and rebates also remain to assist apprentices and trainees with the cost of training. These subsidies include wage support, tutorial, mentoring and interpreter support for eligible apprentices and trainees with a disability and Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA) if the apprentice/trainee has had to move from the parental home to take up or continue an apprenticeship or traineeship.

A summary of Australian Government incentives available to Local Government employers is at Attachment 3. A complete list of Australian Government incentives is available through the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) website at <http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/employer/incentives.asp>.

NSW Government Incentives

NSW Government Allowances and Subsidies for apprentices and **new entrant trainees** include:

- The cost of apprenticeship and new entrant traineeship training (excluding the RTO administration fee)
- Payroll tax rebates
- Exemption from workers compensation premiums for apprentices
- Public transport concessions
- Travel and accommodation expenses paid under Vocational Training Assistance Scheme for new apprentices travelling more than 120kms round trip to attend day or block release with an RTO.

Please note that State Government incentives are not

available to existing worker trainees.

Attachment 3 lists the details of other incentives.

In cases where the apprentice/trainee is employed by a Group Training Organisation (GTO), the GTO will receive the employer's incentives and subsidies.

9. Where to Get More Information

For more information contact:

Australian Apprenticeship Centres

13 38 73

<http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au>

DET State Training Services Regional Offices

13 28 11

<http://apprenticeship.det.nsw.edu.au/html/itscs.htm>

WorkCover NSW

13 10 50

www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Group Training Association of NSW

9746 9333

www.nswgrouptraining.com.au

Part 2: How to Get the Best out of your Investment in Apprenticeships and Traineeships

1. Introduction

Employment of an apprentice or trainee, can be hugely beneficial to your agency, but strategies need to be put into place to:

- Assist the apprentice or trainee to be productive (and not to be a cost to your organisation)
- Assist the apprentice or trainee to complete their training.

One of the problems with apprenticeships and traineeships is attrition. Research by the National Centre of Vocational Education Research shows that about 10 per cent of people who commence a Training Contract do not continue past the first three months of their training and between 16 per cent and 20 per cent do not continue past the first six months. About 29 per cent cancel or withdraw in the first year of their training.¹⁵ Outcomes are slightly better for public sector agencies.

To a large extent, these issues are inter-related. At least some of the attrition is due to the employer determining that the apprentice or trainee is not productive. On the other hand, it is also likely that in many cases, this unproductiveness is due to poor supervision of the apprentice or trainee or choosing the wrong person in the first place.

Recent studies indicate the main reasons given by learners for their decision to stay or leave training arrangements are to do with:

- The extent to which their choice of apprenticeship or traineeship meets their expectations

- The extent to which the quality of the training received compensates for lower training wages
- General workplace conditions and relationships, and
- The extent to which they feel supported as learners in the workplace¹⁶.

This section of the Guide discusses ways in which your agency can address these issues and thus minimise the risks and maximise the benefits of employing apprentices and trainees.

¹⁵ Katrina Ball, NCVET, *Factors influencing completion of apprenticeships and traineeships*, Conference paper, Australian Labour Market Research Workshop on 6-7 December 2004

¹⁶ NSW Department of Education and Training (2008) *A Good Practice Guide for Workplace Supervisors of Apprentices and Trainees*, State Training Services.

2. The Importance of a Learning Culture

Above all, your investment in apprenticeships and traineeships has the best chance of paying off if your agency has a 'learning culture'. This means a real commitment to learning, not just of apprentices and trainees, but all staff, including the provision of opportunities for up-skilling of existing staff. This provides a flow on benefit to apprentices and trainees, with all staff understanding the value of apprentices and trainees and potentially being involved in their support.

A learning culture will empower your organisation to achieve dramatically improved results compared to more traditional organisations, as it enables your organisation to:

- Easily adapt to change
- Actually anticipate change
- Be more responsive to the requirements of government and the community
- Generate more energetic, loyal and goal oriented employees.

The encouragement of ongoing learning is also a vital and effective mechanism for retaining staff, including apprentices and trainees.

Research shows that different organisations have different interpretations of what constitutes a learning culture.¹⁷ In some organisations, it takes the form of a highly structured learning system, while in others, 'a prime feature is the promotion of a more communicative and collaborative environment in which individuals learn from each other and through collaborative work endeavours'. In learning organisations therefore, learning occurs through many mechanisms, including traditional vocational training programs, daily activities, interactions in the workplace and even events such as trade shows and conferences.

In learning organisations:

- The development of a learning culture is generally part of a number of changes to systems and processes to enhance the provision of services
- A learning culture is most effective and sustainable when employees have a role in decision making about practices in the workplace
- Building a learning culture is associated with working with a range of external stakeholders or other partners, including supply chain partners, or other educational or consultancy providers.

A learning and development culture starts with management. It is important there is a champion of learning in management who understands the benefits and processes of learning.

More information on the development of a learning culture can be found at www.training.com.au.

¹⁷ Robyn Johnston and Geof Hawke, *Case Studies of Organisations with established learning cultures*, NCVET, 2002

3. Making the Decision to Employ an Apprentice or Trainee

You must think carefully about both the need for an apprentice or trainee, how they complement your existing staffing structure and work plans, and the capacity of your agency to properly support them.

The employment of apprentices and trainees should reflect broader organisational and workforce goals and the strategic direction of the agency. For instance, if your agency has a policy of outsourcing services, it may not be appropriate or possible for you to employ apprentices (because you don't employ qualified tradespeople or other skilled people who can provide an appropriate level of supervision). On the other hand, if the advantages of outsourcing are becoming less evident, then the employment of apprentices may be feasible.

A typical complaint of apprentices or trainees leaving their employer is that they are used as a source of cheap labour and/or for menial tasks. Apprenticeships and traineeships provide an opportunity to develop skilled staff for your agency. You should also give them useful and productive tasks, which align to the qualification they are undertaking and which provide a fulfilling working and learning environment.

Some issues when considering whether you can properly support an apprentice or trainee follow. These are drawn from a paper issued by the Australian Industry Group.¹⁸

¹⁸ Australian Industry Group, *ibid*.

Depending on the size and nature of your agency, you will also need to decide what is the best mix of apprentices/ trainees, school based apprentices/ trainees and/or existing worker apprenticeships/traineeships.

4. Choosing the Right People

The Merit Selection principles for the NSW public sector identify a number of key standards for the recruitment and selection process for all staff, including apprentices and trainees:¹⁹

- Advertise vacancies to attract a competitive field of applicants (the advertising process is discussed in Step 2 of Section 5 in Part 1 of the Guide)
- Establish selection criteria describing the skills, knowledge and experience needed to do the job
- The selection panel should be independent and diverse in background. As discussed below, it should preferably include a potential supervisor
- Inform applicants of the selection criteria, the selection process and the types of assessment methods you plan to use
- Assess all applicants in the same way.

The Public Sector Workforce Office recommends against over reliance on interviews alone as a selection tool, as different methods work better for different types of work. The Merit Selection Guide describes a number of selection tools you might consider for apprentices or trainees including:

- Work sample tests
- Physical fitness tests.

The Guide explains that any interview needs to:

- Be based on the selection criteria
- Test applicant's skills, knowledge and experience and how these could be used in the job
- Be carefully planned and structured
- Be consistent.

DET²⁰ identifies the key issues which need to be evaluated in the selection and interview process:

- Their knowledge of the trade or traineeship
- How realistic their expectations are of the day to day work they will be undertaking
- Their motivation to succeed in the training

- Their educational and physical suitability
- Their previous experience in similar activities
- Their long term aspirations; and
- How likely they are to experience difficulty in adjusting to the workplace.

¹⁹ Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment (*now Public Sector Workforce Office (PSWO)*), *Merit Selection Guide for the NSW Public Sector Panels*, 2002

²⁰ NSW Department of Education and Training *A Good Practice Guide for Workplace Supervisors of Apprentices and Trainees*, 2008

Further to the issue of education and experience, NCVET research²¹ shows a strong correlation between the level of education attainment and completion of an apprenticeship or traineeship. As noted earlier also, life experience improves completion rates, irrespective of educational background.

The Australian Industry Group²² notes that the interview should be used to provide important information to the applicant:

- Wages – particularly important given that a common reason for departing apprenticeships or traineeships is pay rates
- A general job outline of the position
- A realistic understanding of what can be expected in the position in terms of responsibility, opportunities for creativity, etc.

The occasion of an interview is also a good opportunity to provide a tour of the workplace.

Some employers use aptitude tests as part of the interview and selection process. This can be useful, where there are large numbers of applicants or if the apprenticeship/traineeship requires a minimum level of literacy and numeracy.

People experienced in selecting apprentices and trainees emphasise the importance of attitude and generic skills as qualities to be sought.

²¹ Katrina Ball *Factors influencing completion of apprenticeships and traineeships*, NCVET, Conference paper, Australian Labour Market Research Workshop on 6-7 December 2004

²² AIG, 2007, *ibid*

The Department of Commerce considers commitment as a key quality, which can be established as early as the application, for example through evidence of hobbies and work placements undertaken while at school.

You should also think about who is to be involved in the recruitment process. The AIG study²³ revealed that approximately 75 per cent of supervisors who worked with apprentices said that they did not have any input or participate in:

- Determining the need for an apprentice;
- Preparing a job outline for the new apprentice;
- Conducting a site tour of the work area where the apprentice would be placed; and
- Selecting the apprentice.

By involving the supervisor in the recruitment process, the supervisor is likely to be more committed to ensuring the apprentice/trainee is well supported during their term of employment.

²³ AIG, 2007, ibid

5. The First Days for the Apprentice or Trainee in the Workplace

The first days and weeks in the workplace can be 'make or break' for apprentices and trainees, especially those who are not familiar with the world of work. This is confirmed by experienced supervisors of apprentices and trainees in the public sector.

Reference has previously been made to the importance of a proper induction. There are a number of other measures which can be taken to maximise the chances of an apprentice or trainee to adjust to the workplace²⁴:

- Ensure new apprentices spend their first week becoming familiar with their own working environment and any other workplaces with which they will be in regular contact

- Properly introduce them to the team, particularly those working closely with the new apprentice or trainee in the first few weeks
- Outline expectations of the apprentice and other workers and tradesmen
- Supervisors need to provide daily checks to ensure relationships between the apprentice and the other workers are productive and positive
- Apprentices should spend their first days observing occupational health and safety procedure
- They should also observe tasks they will be expected to perform in the near future and those staff responsible for demonstrating these tasks should explain where the work comes from and where it leads
- Supervisors and tradespeople should regularly ask and encourage questions to ensure the apprentice understands how their contributions will be measured and will benefit the overall business
- Employers need to discuss short-term expectations with the apprentice early on, preferably in the first week, to correct any false impressions and misunderstandings.
- Supervisors should monitor the completion of tasks assigned to apprentices, to demonstrate that the employer is committed to the apprentice's successful induction into the organisation²⁵.

²⁴ AIG, 2007, ibid

²⁵ AIG, 2007, ibid

6. Supervision and On The Job Training

As noted in Section 6 of Part 1 of the Guide, 20 per cent of the apprentice or trainee's time should be allocated to structured training (particularly if completing a workplace-based traineeship). Apprentices and trainees cannot be expected to complete their assigned exercises, research activities or on-line training whilst answering phone calls or undertaking work-related tasks.

Given the close relationship between the supervisor and apprentice or trainee, the selection of the appropriate supervisor is vital. Similar to effective mentor/mentee relationships, there should be a good match between the two.

A good supervisor should have²⁶:

- Strong and positive interpersonal skills
- Undertaken at least basic supervisory training
- The ability to motivate, manage conflicts, resolve problems and emergencies and do their best to meet their own performance targets
- The ability to ensure others contribute to meeting business goals.

The supervisor acts as a role model and coach to the apprentice or trainee. Coaching includes all the efforts you make to motivate others, teach them about the work, develop their skills, provide them with feedback and recognise their achievements²⁷.

Supervising Apprentices and Trainees goes on to provide the following tips to effective coaching:

- Acknowledge what the apprentice or trainee already knows – they may have knowledge and experience that they have gained in a variety of ways, e.g. school, hobbies, previous employment
- Explain the ‘big picture’ – give the reasons why a particular task may need to be done in a certain way. In your explanation draw on real examples
- Provide incentives to learn – explain what the apprentice or trainee will achieve
- Provide choice – everyone learns differently, find out from the apprentice or trainee how they like to learn, e.g. do they prefer written instructions or to be shown how to do something a number of times
- Remember though, that where skills are being learned, you will need to give the learner the opportunity to practise
- Encourage initiative and innovative thought by listening to the apprentice’s or trainee’s ideas and providing feedback
- Communicate with the apprentice or trainee, think about:
 - how and how often you are going to communicate with them
 - whether your instructions are clear and simple and are not more complex than necessary for the job
 - how you are going to ensure a two way communication flow
- Check whether you have realistic expectations

- Remember that people work and learn best in a supportive environment so make sure that you act immediately against any bullying or harassment, as you have both federal and state legislation to back you up.

²⁶ AIG, 2007

²⁷ NSW Department of Education and Training, *Supervising Apprentices and Trainees*, 2008

7. Mentoring or Peer Support Arrangements

Mentoring arrangements are useful for all staff but particularly for new staff entering the workforce or disadvantaged jobseekers. They are increasingly common in the NSW public sector. Mentors provide moral support and guidance and a mechanism for discussing any concerns with a third party who may be able to act as an intermediary between the employer and the apprentice or trainee.

The mentor may be within or outside your agency. Retired tradespeople can be very effective in mentoring roles. Former tradespeople still employed in the agency may also be appropriate mentors.

Mentoring has been found to be particularly effective in helping Indigenous people cope with various pressures that can place them at risk of failing to complete their training programme. Early intervention through a structured mentoring relationship gives them the tools and support they need to deal effectively with these pressures while completing their qualification.

You will need to plan and tailor your approach to the needs of the apprentice or trainee, their work colleagues and the formal training provider.

The Way Ahead for Aboriginal People provides mentoring support for aboriginal apprentices and trainees. There are currently 28 mentors providing support to about 130 apprentices and trainees around the state.

For information on the service, please contact your nearest State Training Services centre on 13 28 11 or www.apprenticeship.nsw.edu.au.

8. Job Rotation

Job rotation has many benefits:

- It minimises the chances of apprentices or trainees becoming bored or stale
- It increases their understanding of the agency and where different work roles fit within the whole
- They learn to work with a range of people
- It ensures the apprentice or trainee is exposed to the full range of tasks and skills required.
- Rotation should be approached in a planned and controlled, rather than ad hoc fashion.

9. Projects

Another way of challenging and motivating apprentices and trainees is to assign them individual workplace projects. These may be of a theoretical nature, such as mapping work processes, or a more practical exercise such as designing and/or assembling a device.

A leading electrical contractor makes a point of challenging first year apprentices by assigning them relatively complex repair jobs, which would otherwise only be done by third or fourth year apprentices. Importantly, this is supported by very thorough on the job training and qualified tradespeople check all work.

10. Good Communication

Successful employers of apprentices and trainees emphasise the importance of good communication. Key pointers include:

- Asking questions and encouraging interaction
- Ensuring instructions are clear
- Including them in staff meetings
- Giving constructive feedback and positive encouragement.

The need for good communication extends beyond the supervisor to all staff. All staff have a role in supporting and encouraging the apprentice or trainee.

Regular meetings are recommended between supervisors and all apprentices/trainees to get timely feedback on any technical and/or interpersonal issues of staff so that they can be dealt with as soon as they arise²⁸.

Ongoing communication also builds the apprentice/trainee's understanding of and commitment to the agency. They should be given the opportunity to contribute to decision making and/or the development of new, more efficient processes.

²⁸ AIG, 2007

11. Pay and conditions

The market for apprentices is competitive and one of the key factors influencing decisions by prospective apprentices and trainees is pay and conditions.

It is now very common in the private sector for apprentices and trainees in skill shortage areas to be paid above award wages.

While there is no explicit regulatory impediment to doing so in the public sector, equity and budgetary considerations generally mitigate against this.

Instead, many agencies have established industrial arrangements which are at least competitive with or superior to private sector employers. Some agencies have also extended to apprentices the allowances that are normally restricted to qualified tradespeople.

Public sector agencies generally have a reputation for good working conditions, which should be emphasised to prospective apprentices and trainees.

12. Retaining your Apprentice or Trainee

Clearly, the measure of success of your investment in apprentices and trainees goes well beyond the period of the apprenticeship or traineeship.

Your chances of retaining skilled staff can be maximised by a range of measures including:

Fully utilising flexible working arrangements to allow for different employees' needs

Involving staff in decision making

Providing opportunities for up-skilling

Developing and providing access to career paths/progression.

Of course, in practice, the latter actually leads to an ongoing need to employ apprentices and trainees to replace those who have progressed to senior positions in the organisation.

Every opportunity should be made to include those people in supporting apprenticeships and traineeships, such as by being workplace mentors.

Attachment 1

References

Papers and Documents

Australian Industry Group and Department of Education, Science and Training, *A Guide to Managing the First 100 days of an Apprenticeship*, 2007.

Dr Phillip Toner, *Meeting Trade Skill Shortages through Innovation and Flexibility in the NSW VET Sector*, University of Western Sydney, 2004.

Government Skills Australia, *Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships for the Public Sector: A Guide for employers using the Public Sector Training Package*, 2008.

Katrina Ball, *Factors influencing completion of apprenticeships and traineeships*, NCVER, Conference paper, Australian Labour Market Research Workshop on 6-7 December 2004

Katrina Ball and David John, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Apprentice and Trainee Completion Rates*, 2005

NSW Department of Education and Training, *Supervising Apprentices and Trainees*, 2008.

NSW Public Sector Workforce Office, *Equal to the task: A good practice Guide* available at www.eeo.nsw.gov.au/disabil/equal/

NSW Public Sector Workforce Office, *'Making it our business, Improving aboriginal employment in the NSW Public Sector, Strategic Framework and Resource Guide, 2006 - 2008'*, 2006

Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment, *Merit Selection Guide for the NSW Public Sector Panels*, 2002

Robyn Johnston and Geof Hawke, *Case Studies of Organisations with established learning cultures*, NCVER, 2002

Tom Karmel, National Centre for Vocational Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Older Workers in apprenticeships and traineeships*, 2006

Websites

<http://www.apprenticeship.det.nsw.edu.au>, for information on apprenticeships and traineeships in NSW

<http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au>, for general information on apprenticeships and traineeships, including Australian Apprenticeship Centres

<http://www.training.com.au>, for a range of information on vocational education and training

http://www.gtaltd.com.au/career_options/career_home.html, for information on group training organisations and the benefits of using them

<http://www.nswgrouptraining.com.au>, for information on group training organisations in NSW.

Attachment 2

Government-Specific Traineeships In Nsw

A series of qualifications designed specifically for people working in the public sector are available as traineeships in NSW. These qualifications are nationally recognised and are part of the Public Sector Training Package (PSP04) or are TAFE accredited courses.

The traineeships listed below comprise generalist qualifications in government and specialist qualifications in areas such as court services, land administration and occupational health and safety. The generalist qualifications are suitable for a range of occupations in 'backroom' areas and front line service delivery. They encompass the essential requirements for working in government and the wide range of knowledge and skills required to contribute effectively to the work of the organisation. These traineeships are suitable for staff ranging from entry level to supervisory level.

Traineeships in Government (from the Public Sector training package)

- Certificate II in Government
- Certificate III in Government
- Certificate IV in Government

- Certificate III in Government (Court Compliance)
- Certificate IV in Government (Court Compliance)
- Certificate IV in Government (Court Services)

- Certificate III in Government (Land Administration)
- Certificate IV in Government (Land Administration)

- Certificate IV in Government (Project Management)
- Certificate IV in Government (Service Delivery)
- Certificate IV in Government (Financial Services)
- Certificate IV in Government (Procurement)
- Certificate IV in Government (Investigation)
- Certificate IV in Government (Road Transport Compliance)

- Certificate IV in Government (Injury Claims Administration)
- Certificate IV in Government (Injury Rehabilitation Management)
- Certificate IV in Government (Occupational Health and Safety)

Traineeships used in State schools and TAFE colleges

- Certificate III in Education Support (Administration / Info Technology)
- Certificate III in Education Support (Food & Hospitality)
- Certificate III in Education Support (General Assistant/Toolstore)
- Certificate III in Education Support (Library)
- Certificate III in Education Support (Rural)
- Certificate III in Education Support (Science)
- Certificate III in Education Support - Aboriginal
- Certificate III in Education Support - Teacher's Aide (Special)
- Certificate IV in Education Support - Government (School Support Services)

Attachment 3

Australian Government incentives for apprentices, trainees and their employers²⁹

Australian Government incentives for employers of apprentices and trainees are no longer available to Australian and State Government agencies. They remain for all statutory authorities and Local Government. Subsidies and rebates also remain to assist apprentices and trainees with the cost of training. These subsidies include wage support, tutorial, mentoring and interpreter support for eligible apprentices and trainees with a disability and Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA) if the apprentice/trainee has had to move from the parental home to take up or continue an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Examples of employer incentives for new apprentices and trainees available to statutory authorities and local government are:

- Commencement and completion incentives totalling \$4000 for Certificate III and higher training, paid to eligible employers.
- Innovation Incentive providing an additional \$1100 paid on commencement in an identified occupation.
- Rural and Regional Incentive providing employers in non-metropolitan areas an additional incentive to employ and train an apprentice or trainee in industries with identified skill needs.
- Assistance to apprentices and trainees with Disabilities providing wage assistance to eligible employers and additional funding to support off-the-job training to eligible apprentices.

A comprehensive list can be obtained from www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au or contact your Australian Apprenticeships Centre.

²⁹ The incentives outlined in this Guide were correct at the time of printing.

NSW State Government Incentives for Apprentices, Trainees and their Employers

NSW Government Allowances and Subsidies for apprentices and new entrant trainees include:

- The cost of apprenticeship and new entrant traineeship training (excluding the RTO administration fee)
- Payroll tax rebates

Please note that State Government incentives are not available to existing worker trainees.

Other incentives provided by the NSW State Government include the following:

\$200 Gear Up Allowance for Apprentices from 1 January 2008

First time apprentices in New South Wales benefit from a \$200 Gear Up clothing allowance introduced from 1 January 2008. This initiative under the Learn or Earn policy provides each apprentice commencing from 1 January 2008 with \$200 to assist them to purchase appropriate and safe clothing, including uniforms and protective equipment.

Apprentices are informed of the allowance in their approval letter and will receive a cheque for \$200 when their apprenticeship attains 'registered' status or three months after their commencement date. Apprentices will only be entitled to this payment once, even if they cancel their apprenticeship and recommence with another employer or commence a different apprenticeship. Apprentices who withdraw from their apprenticeship and recommence with another employer prior to receiving the allowance, will receive the allowance when the subsequent apprenticeship is 'registered' or formally approved.

\$100 rebate on Apprentice's car registration

First and second year apprentices receive a \$100 rebate on their car registration. Apprentices should apply through the RTA. The application form is available on the RTA web site at

http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/registration/apprentice_rebate.html.

To be eligible for the rebate, the vehicle must be:

- Registered in NSW.
- Registered in the name of an eligible apprentice, or jointly with an eligible apprentice.
- Be registered for general private or general business use.
- Have been registered in the name of an eligible apprentice, or jointly with an eligible apprentice, at the time the registration fee and motor vehicle tax were last paid.

Travel concessions

First, second and third year apprentices and new entrant trainees receive concession travel passes on NSW buses, ferries and trains. Some private operators also provide similar concessions. Forms are initially sent apprentices and new entrant trainees with their approval letters. Forms for the renewal of the concession card are sent to apprentices and new entrant trainees via their employer. A new form is being issued from January 2008 that requires photo ID.

<http://apprenticeship.det.nsw.edu.au/docs/VT77form.pdf>

Travel and Accommodation Assistance

Apprentices and new entrant trainees may be eligible for travel and accommodation assistance if they need to travel more than 120kms round trip to attend day or block release with their RTO. Assistance for accommodation is \$28 per day and the rate for travel expenses is 12 cents per kilometre. This applies to both public and private transport. Forms are available on our website at <http://apprenticeship.det.nsw.edu.au/docs/vtasform.pdf>

Exemption from worker's compensation premiums

Employers receive exemptions from workers compensation premiums for their apprentices.

To be eligible for the apprentice premium exemption you must have a valid workers compensation policy and have entered into a NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) approved 'Training Contract' with the apprentice in a designated trade vocation.

When you renew your workers compensation policy your Scheme Agent will require you to complete the wage declaration forms as usual and provide details about the apprentices you employ for the purpose of obtaining the apprentice premium exemption. Your Scheme Agent will automatically calculate your premium exemption when calculating your premium.

For policies commenced or renewed between 31 December 2006 and 30 December 2007, the apprentice premium exemption will be deducted from your final premium. The final premium (called the hindsight premium) is calculated by your Scheme Agent at the end of the policy period using the actual amount of wages paid during the policy period. Your Scheme Agent will rebate any credit owing to you as a result of this adjustment.

For policies commenced or renewed on or after 31 December 2007, the apprentice premium exemption will be applied to your premium at the start of the policy period. This means that the premium exemption will reduce your initial invoiced premium. The exemption will be applied again when your final premium is calculated at the end of the policy period. See the Work Cover NSW website for more information

<http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/FAQs/default.htm>

Payroll tax rebates

Prior to 1 July 2008, wages paid to apprentices and new entrant trainees in NSW were exempt from payroll tax. From 1 July 2008, this exemption no longer applies and all employers are required to include the wages and salaries paid to apprentices and new entrant trainees in their payroll tax calculation.

A rebate scheme replaces this exemption. Rebates are provided by the Office of State Revenue (OSR) by allowing the amount of the rebate to be offset against monthly payroll tax payments. OSR provide this offset facility through their monthly calculator online service.

Employers should regularly check for changes in payroll tax requirements at <http://www.osr.nsw.gov.au>

Rebate on vehicle registration for small business owners

The NSW government provides small business owners with a rebate on the cost of registration of a vehicle for each apprentice employed. The RTA provides information at http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/registration/apprentice_rebate.html

For inquiries about NSW Government incentives contact your nearest State Training Services office on 13 28 11

Attachment 4

Requirements for induction of apprentices/trainees

The supervisor of the apprentice/trainee should inform the apprentice/trainee of:

- A description of the business, its goals and strategies and how the apprentice or trainee fits into the overall picture
- A review of the Training Plan issued by the RTO to clarify the competencies to be achieved
- Basic work rules and work conditions
- When and how they will be paid;
- Leave entitlements, hours of duty etc
- Who in the workplace to contact if taking leave;
- Child protection policy and procedures;

General information including:

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Workers compensation information and procedures including workplace injury notification and management
- Superannuation benefits (trainees automatically become members of First State Super)
- Any special requirements of the local workplace
- A tour of the workplace and facilities
- An introduction to key personnel and immediate work colleagues.

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

Apprentices/trainees must be advised that all employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of employees, including apprentices, trainees and others in the workplace. Employees must, while at work, take reasonable care for the health, safety and welfare of people who are at the employee's place of work and co-operate with the employer or other person in relation to OHS.

The designated workplace supervisor or co-ordinator is responsible under the OH&S Act for ensuring a safe and healthy environment conducive to both work and learning for apprentices/trainees.

Equal employment opportunity

Apprentices/trainees should be advised of relevant EEO information such as:

Their right to:

- A workplace that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment;
- Develop the skills and knowledge necessary to complete the traineeship; and
- Fair processes to deal with work-related complaints and grievances.

Their responsibility to:

- Respect differences amongst colleagues and customers such as cultural and social diversity; and
- Treat people fairly (i.e. not discriminating against or harassing them).

State Training Services

Regional Offices

Hunter & Central Coast

Level 1 State Office Block
117 Bull Street
Newcastle West NSW 2302
Ph: (02) 4974 8570 Fax: (02) 4925 2139

Riverina

87 Forsyth Street
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
Ph: (02) 6937 7600 Fax: (02) 6921 0724

New England

Level 2 Noel Park House
155-157 Marius Street
Tamworth NSW 2340
Ph: (02) 6755 5099 Fax: (02) 6766 4120

Central & Northern Sydney

Level 13 12 Help Street
Chatswood NSW 2067
Ph: (02) 9242 1700 Fax: (02) 9415 3979

Western Sydney & Blue Mountains

Ground Floor,
16-18 Wentworth Street
Parramatta NSW 2150
Ph: (02) 9204 7400 Fax: (02) 9635 9775

Illawarra & South Coast

Level 1, Block E State Office Block
84 Crown Street
Wollongong NSW 2500
Ph: (02) 4224 9300 Fax: (02) 4224 9334

North Coast & Mid North Coast

Suite 3, Level 4
29 Molesworth Street
Lismore NSW 2480
Ph: (02) 6627 8400 Fax: (02)6621 9994

Western NSW

Level 1, State Office Block
Cnr Kite & Anson Streets
Orange NSW 2800
Ph: (02) 6392 8500 Fax: (02) 6392 8539

Southern & South West Sydney

Level 2,
41 - 45 Rickard Road
Bankstown NSW 2200
Ph: (02) 8707 9600 Fax: (02) 9709 5356

