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MEDIA RELEASE

Opportunity for hundreds of new apprentices and trainees to be engaged by small and medium sized-businesses in WA

Group Training Organisations in Western Australia today welcomed the government's announcement that, if re-elected, it will invest \$32.4 million to provide openings for an additional 300 new apprentices and trainees engaged through the group training network.

Premier Mark McGowan announced that the four-year program would enable 300 positions for apprentices and trainees placed with small and medium sized businesses and employed through Group Training Organisations (GTOs).

The Chair of the Apprentice Employment Network WA (AEN WA) Stuart Diepeveen said the initiative will provide a real benefit to smaller employers in helping to build a pipeline of skilled apprentices and trainees.

"It is vitally important that we look to the next generation of young people leaving school, and older workers changing jobs and acquiring new skills, who are in demand by employers.

"This program will be a big help to many small and medium sized businesses that want to take on apprentices and trainees and undertake work on state government contracts," Mr Diepeveen said.

"This is where GTOs come into their own – helping SMEs that may not have previously engaged in the training sector to take on an apprentice or trainee. GTOs handle all the administration, pay the wages and entitlements and provide the mentoring and support that makes a difference to that person completing and gaining a qualification."

A distinctive feature of group training is that the apprentice or trainee can be returned by the host employer to the GTO if, for example, work dries up, or the need arises for more diverse or different training or workplace experience.

The group training network felt the full brunt of the COVID-induced recession, with hundreds of apprentices and trainees in Western Australia being handed back by host businesses. GTOs maintained apprentices and trainees, paid their wages and entitlements and have placed almost all back into work.

AEN WA's recent policy paper, ['Restoring and Reinvigorating the Apprenticeship Sector'](#), outlined the challenges faced as a result of the pandemic and the suggested path to boosting apprentice commencements and completions.

AEN WA also welcomed two recent election commitments by Labor – a pledge to fund the gap in total wage costs between mature age and junior apprentices for 200 additional apprentices, and a \$3.4 million pilot program to provide 150 places for mature age apprentices and trainees in the building and construction industry. It will see 100 places allocated to GTOs and 50 to direct employment, with a minimum 15 per cent for female and Indigenous apprentices.

The State Opposition has also promised a two-year incentive and retention payment to encourage businesses in the state to employ up to 20,000 apprentices, worth \$200 million.

“The state election on March 13 is a critical time in guaranteeing a strong future for the thousands of existing apprentices and trainees, as well as those aspiring to or considering a vocational career choice,” Mr Diepeveen said.

Anyone seeking an apprentice or trainee can visit the [AEN WA website](#) to find a GTO member who can help.

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The Apprentice Employment Network WA (AEN WA) is the peak association representing 17-member Group Training Organisations operating in Western Australia. It was incorporated in 1993 and is a not-for-profit registered charity. AEN WA members are located throughout metropolitan and regional Western Australia and deliver apprenticeships and traineeships within a wide range of industries.