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## CEO's Address

Alex Vranjac-Wheeler

Chief Executive

27<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Welcome ladies and gentlemen, members, delegates, presidents, vice presidents, life members.**

It's fair to say that the last 12 months have been shaped by an enormous amount of change for our industry.

But as the old adage goes, if we are not changing, we are not growing, so in the first three months of this year, we reviewed our organisation's purpose and reason for being. We tested what members wanted and what we need to deliver. We confirmed that our purpose, as outlined in our constitution, is still relevant – we are here to promote and advance the electrical industry. And in order to do so, we must deliver on the objectives outlined in our constitution which largely fall into three big focus areas – advocacy, education, and support for members. We tested our thinking with NPAF and the wider membership, and there was agreement that these three areas of focus needed to drive our efforts as an organisation.

NPAF also discussed opportunities including – a strengthened QA process, how we could consider a tiered approach to membership, and how we work better together with branches to leverage opportunities around sponsorship. This process of sharing and gaining feedback and insights from our branches confirmed for me that we need strong branches that are engaged with their members to deliver for their local needs. We share common goals around improved member engagement, increasing the representation in regions that are underrepresented, and ensuring that we remain relevant to our membership base.

The ETCO sale provided us with an opportunity to set up our industry and the organisation for the future with a strong balance sheet and foundation that is there for generations to come. Our approach to our future needs to be a prudent one – we need to carefully manage and grow the foundation we now have, and at the same time create a sustainable and small return annually to ensure that our association is financially responsible and can continue to reinvest in its membership. This relies on us maintaining and growing membership, ensuring that our benefits for members are relevant

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and tangible, and that we are seen as a leader both in the industry and with other stakeholders.

**The last 6 or so months have also reinforced for me that membership of ME is a choice for our industry.**

We have an opportunity to reset the role national office plays as servant leaders to our members who are both customers and owners of the association. We are nationally led and regionally enabled through the activities and roles that our branches play.

We are working hard to increase the consultation we take with our branches so that we can weave feedback from them into how we operate and where we focus.

**Over the next 12–18 months, our strategy is focused on Growth Opportunities.**

We are focused on increasing our membership from 26% to 40% over the next 3–5 years. And this will require a different member offering and way of engaging. We need to build this level of membership in order to credibly say we represent the industry.

We know that there are circa somewhere between 5000 and 8000 electrical contracting firms, so our ability to engage with them on matters that will be of interest to them includes leading the way on technology adoption and adjacent industries such as sustainable automation technologies, HVAC, and the like.

Critical to doing this is the ability to support the industry with continuous learning opportunities that help the industry adopt technologies at a much faster rate, and to assist our members with business mastery and skills that will drive increased leadership and business success. Whilst our workforce may be qualified to undertake a range of activities particularly in future-focused technologies and renewables, the competency level varies considerably and there is no one-stop shop where the industry can go to get a consistent and trusted learning experience.

Technical innovation, sustainability imperatives, regulatory shifts, and evolving customer and member demands mean we need to support our members and the wider industry to adopt these technologies in order to drive increased productivity and efficiency.

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**On that note - I am most excited to talk to you about our new initiative -  
TRADE MASTER!**

Trade Master is born out of the needs of members to be able to access continuous professional development that is not constrained or hampered by NZQA and other training compliance requirements.

Trade Master will be partnering with industry suppliers and wholesalers to co-deliver a range of technical training for our members and the wider industry. Programmes will be delivered online, face to face, and with suppliers to ensure that our industry is ready for the delivery of electrifying NZ.

The EWRB has been supportive of our approach, and they see benefit in us helping them to implement a competency regime around endorsements, and the potential of a CPD programme in the future.

Master Electricians is well positioned to leverage industry, brand credibility, and strategic partnerships to deliver high-quality, targeted training solutions to enhance the skills, competence, and marketability of participants.

We are stoked to have retained Mat, who is our General Manager and setting up partnerships with a number of suppliers and wholesalers who are keen to partner with us in this training space. So he will be available after this for further conversation.

In addition to the Trade Master initiative, we also have a unique opportunity to own the advocacy and workforce leadership space for the industry across standards, qualifications and funding advice, and workforce strategy.

We are now back in the driving seat with the Workforce Development Council to shape and develop the sector, and I would like to acknowledge and thank Bruce Dalton for his contribution as chair of the Sector Reference Group for the past 18 months.

We met with Penny Simmonds, who confirmed there is a desire to bring back ITOs version 2.0, and we will command a seat at the top table around governance and leadership of those organisations.

We have scheduled the first meeting for the National Industry Advocacy Group with a huge response from industry supporting this initiative. We are also being asked more and more for our views on regulatory reform and policy that will impact our sector – our engagements with Minister Penk, Seymour, and Simmonds have been fruitful.

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Most recently, we have been invited by EECA to help them give effect to their electrification strategy – demonstrating we already have government and stakeholders coming to us.

**In addition to the launching of Trade Master, I am pleased to confirm that we have had some wins already in the new strategy –**

The Serene heater issue has been a silver lining in providing a laser focus on the issues that led to that situation. I believe we acted quickly in supporting our members with clarity on how to manage that issue. And it enabled us to meet with several ministers, which was critical for repositioning ourselves as leaders in the industry.

We have made some progress in securing funding for the NZ/AUS Standards, holding the EWRB to task and demanding more consultation, as well as working more closely with MBIE, invigorated partnerships, new educational offerings, and regional roadshows as Behind the Tools.

Most recently, we met with MBIE, who has confirmed that they are introducing an electrical safety instrument, which essentially is a way to get standards updated and cited without needing to go through Cabinet. We are awaiting further information on this before sharing it more widely with members.

**2024–2025 is the time to Focus on the Future.**

We need to stay ahead of the pace of change and navigate the industry challenges. It will also be a time to celebrate our centenary – a chance to acknowledge the past, but to also ensure that we are well placed for the future.

**In closing, I would like to acknowledge** and thank our outgoing president, Gary, and board member, Craig; welcome in our new president, Mark, and vice president, Rhys.

Thank you also to the ME board, the staff who have been on the journey of transformation, our NPAF members, our current presidents, our rules committee, our subcommittees, our volunteers, and all our members who take time to provide feedback.

I would also like to thank all of our sponsors who help us provide opportunities for networking and events. We are grateful and excited to have secured sponsorship for our excellence awards from Ideal, Powerbase, JA



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Russells, and Active. It is fantastic to have these partners, among many others, on board for this year.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to share with you a little bit of our future roadmap. As always, happy to take questions and continue the discussion over a drink.