



Australian Government

A U S T R A L I A N A P P R E N T I C E S H I P S

Your Life. Your Career. Your Future.



Minister's Award for Excellence for Commitment to Australian Apprenticeships

Finalist

Lawrie Martin

Director (Townsville region)

Queensland Government Agency of Employment, Industry Development & Innovation



Lawrie Martin tried his hand at about three or four different trades as a teenager, but in panel beating, he found his niche. It was clear early on that Lawrie was dedicated and ambitious.

'I wanted to improve myself from day one,' says Lawrie.

'I also wanted to better the business.'

This is why when he was still an apprentice, Lawrie engaged in Chinese language training to better communicate with Chinese-speaking customers.

He moved into a leading-hand position with his employer after finishing his apprenticeship, but it wasn't long before Lawrie was picking up more new skills—this time, by travelling to London to work.

On returning to Australia, Lawrie began working as the Quality Controller for a large body shop in Brisbane when he was just 22 years old.

'I was responsible for 35 sub-contractors,' Lawrie recalls.

'So the skills I'd picked up overseas had really increased my opportunities.'

His keenness to increase his own skills flowed into mentoring others and at 27, he moved to a management position with Alexander Bodyworks in Townsville. The company raised its profile after winning several training awards, thanks to Lawrie's ability to attract and recruit Australian Apprentices.

'When the technical college funding was secured, they asked if I'd join the board because of the work I'd done in Townsville over the last few years. Then as a result of my leadership experience they selected me to be chairman,' Lawrie says.

Lawrie now works with the Queensland Government as part of an initiative to create 100 000 jobs and maintain the uptake of Australian Apprentices.

'It's our job to build on the jobs in regional Queensland because if we lose those skills it's going to be much harder for them to return. My role is representing businesses in the region in industry development,' he says.

Lawrie is such a strong advocate of Australian Apprenticeships—and Australia's high-quality training—that he promotes it internationally. After being approached three years ago by foreign officials, Lawrie now helps other countries develop a training framework—particularly countries with social and humanitarian issues.

‘What I’ve been able to do is help these people identify where their shortfalls are in meeting a world-class skills level. I head overseas every six months, and really think it’s valuable. The sky’s the limit.’

Lawrie says Australia is a leader in providing training.

‘In panel beating and painting, not even America has a nationally recognised training system the way we do,’ he says.

‘Apprenticeships are really such a great opportunity for those who want to have flexibility, money in their pocket, opportunities to travel, and be able to provide for their future without going through university first. It doesn’t distract you from taking up uni in later years when you probably value it more and focus more. Having technical skills opens doors in many careers. I’m a testament of where an Australian Apprenticeship can take you,’ he says.

