



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

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Making a splash

Aquarena

Central & South Eastern Western Australia region



‘Our work isn’t just confined within the walls of the building. We’re a community resource, not just an aquatic centre,’ says Colin Hassel, the manager of Geraldton’s Aquarena.

Aquarena attracts more than 300 000 visitors each year, offering recreation programs, casual swimming, hydrotherapy, competitive swimming, water polo and social events.

Staff and Australian Apprentices also take part in special projects, like the award winning Outback Road Show, which teaches swimming in regional communities.

‘My most ambitious trip was Swimming Across Australia when we travelled from Geraldton to Sydney with a pool on the back of a truck to raise awareness about preventable drowning in backyard pools,’ Colin says.

That particular project involved 32 students, including three Australian School-based Apprentices, and another four who took up an Australian School-based Apprenticeship afterwards.

‘You can’t help being infected by Colin’s enthusiasm for the training and what he can do,’ Julie Payne, Account Manager at CCI Employ*FAST* Geraldton says.

‘Colin has a total dedication to his training. He’s got a great reputation.’

Aquarena is now training seven Australian Apprentices, including one with a disability and one from a non-English speaking background.

‘The trainees get more than what their traineeship covers,’ Julie says.

‘They end up with a life saving certificate that’s not part of the traineeship. One trainee has gone from not being able to swim to having his bronze certificate.’

Colin’s dedication to training is so great that he helps other nearby councils with their training. He believes it’s important to build relationships with other councils and the community and help pass on his knowledge.

‘Training is the lifeblood of our organisation,’ he says.

‘It’s a shame to keep all that information to yourself. To share it is really gratifying. And if some one goes on to become a quality employee, that’s better still. I suppose that’s the greatest achievement we can get—meaningful employment—not just a job.’

Australian Apprentices at Aquarena have all the support they need while they learn. One trainee had a disability that made it hard for him to write. Aquarena provided a computer program to help him with the coursework for his Certificate II in Recreation.

‘The biggest challenge was people’s perception,’ Colin says.

‘You see, lifeguards have a persona—often a misguided one—like Baywatch. But it’s not about that. It’s whether you can do the job or not.’

The commitment to helping people with disability extends beyond providing training opportunities. Aquarena has run a small crèche for the past nine years and has now developed facilities designed to accommodate people and children with disability. The new crèche will soon begin operating and provide play and learning experience for all children, particularly those with disability.

‘The crèche will employ people with physical and intellectual challenges on site at Aquarena,’ Colin explains.

Winning this award has been confirmation for all the staff at Aquarena that they are on the right track.

‘For me, the real win out of this is that it gives us recognition, and makes my life a bit easier when I go to get more support for our programs.’

