



Australian Government

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A growing workforce

Brisbane City Council

Brisbane region



Brisbane City Council has found a new way to engage and retain its workforce.

Their Growing Council's Future Workforce initiative offers additional vocational development and has increased the number of Australian Apprentices moving into entry level roles—in fact, the council has filled every available position so far.

Brisbane City Council employs 241 Australian Apprentices, including 136 full-time apprentices, 17 Australian School-based Apprentices and 88 trainees, many of whom are Indigenous, from a non-English speaking background, or people with disability.

Vocational Development Project Leader Craig Madsen says the additional training offered to Australian Apprentices is a real incentive.

'Some suggested that giving them extra skills would see them leave, but we look at it as broadening their skills—making sure we haven't just got good tradesmen, but great employees, with good communication and leadership skills to meet our future needs,' Craig says.

The initiative provides pathways beyond their Australian Apprenticeship into leadership and project management roles, and improves retention.

Brisbane City Council offers Australian Apprenticeships in a vast range of trades—from plumbing, electrical, and engineering to horticulture and green keeping. It also employs trainees in business administration, libraries and construction.

As Participant Support Officer, it's Tony Sinclair's job to make sure Australian Apprentices are handling their workload and enjoying their time. He also supports supervisors and advises them on ways to communicate with Australian Apprentices.

Tony says the initiative has led to a retention rate in excess of 80 per cent.

'When the mining industry took off, we had trouble recruiting—so part of this strategy was making sure we had people qualified and skilled to do the work we need to provide.'

'We have an obligation to the ratepayers of Brisbane to be able to provide services,' he adds.

The Brisbane City Council also employs Olympians and Paralympians on flexible, part-time Australian Apprenticeships.

'Whilst they train and compete at an elite level in the sport world we give them the skills to plan a career beyond sport,' Craig says.

Tony adds it's a win-win situation.

'Some areas don't have enough work to support a full-time Australian Apprentice, so it fits well with athletes who need time off to train and compete,' he says.

'With traineeships in particular—but also apprentices—what we're looking for on day one isn't someone who already has the skills. We are looking for people who are committed, goal oriented and driven to learn.'

Tony cites the example of a young Paralympian who is completing an electrical apprenticeship.

'He's absolutely shining,' Craig says.

'He's brought all the attributes that make a world-class swimmer into the apprenticeship and it's working out well for business and for him.'

