



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 Support Services Excellence

Finalist

Tarah Ker

Senior Business Consultant
MAS National



It seems nothing is too much of a challenge for Tarah. She is always ready to go the extra mile for her clients.

The MAS business constantly makes a difference to the rural community.

'I love working with these people. You have to be ready for anything though, like kicking off the high heels, jumping the fence and helping pull a calf, then changing into the farmer's oversize flannel shirt and heading off to present the day's work at my next appointment,' she says.

'It's not the sort of thing city life prepares you for. You just have to get in there, go with the flow and learn to laugh a lot.'

Tarah has worked for MAS National, Mount Gambier, South Australia for six years and lived and worked in the south east for 14 years. Her work territory covers a staggering 21 000 square kilometres.

She seems to find an opportunity to help everyone she interacts with. Take a hairdressing Australian Apprentice in a drought-affected town recently.

'The town and it's only hairdressing salon was cash strapped. The owner couldn't afford to keep her apprentice on so I called around hoping to find a salon that would help her continue her education,' Tarah says.

She found a new employer for the 17-year-old apprentice, in a larger town close to her home and family.

'We set up the interview for the next day. She got the job and is now moving into her third year—well on the way to finishing her apprenticeship,' Tarah says.

Agriculture is also a big focus for training in Tarah's region. She always has a pair of gumboots ready for impromptu meetings in the middle of a paddock when she is matching a suitable Australian Apprentice with a property manager.

Tarah is undertaking independent studies, including a unit that specialises in culturally diverse environments and a unit on effective communications with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

'This is an important issue because I get to interact with a huge cross section of people, including many with non-English speaking skills. Being able to break down communication barriers is vital when matching appropriate employers and employees,' she explains.

Tarah also works with the Raukkan Indigenous community and is excited about the potential of the program they have developed.

'They have set up a community farm they run as a successful business. Many of the community children don't go to school, so we try to interest them in working on the farm for a few days a week,' Tarah explains.

‘They love every aspect of the work. It is so rewarding to see their self esteem soar. We’re only nine or 10 months into the program and now have the kids saying, “I want to keep working on the farm.” We reply, “This is the deal, you attend school, work hard and you get to be a farm employee.”’

‘It is such an honour to be recognised for doing a job I really love. The rewards are delivered every day. I feel privileged to be part of a team that can impact the lives of so many Australians,’ Tarah says.

