

2009 Minister's Awards for Excellence for Employers of Australian Apprentices

Example of a winning application

Business Category	Government
How long have you been employing Australian Apprentices?	30 years

Does your business/organisation have a planned induction process?
formal and structured
<p>Details:</p> <p>This organisation provides all Australian Apprentices with a comprehensive local and corporate induction.</p> <p>The corporate induction follows a proven structured process that is delivered by the Vocational Project Development leader and the Participant Support coordinator. The Australian Apprentices attend a bulk induction and are usually welcomed by the Lord Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer. Specialist guest speakers at the induction include Workplace Health & Safety Officers, Payroll Administrative Officers, Australian Apprentice Coordinators and representatives from the Australian Apprenticeships Centre and the relevant Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The employer recognises the importance of a quality induction process and the part it plays in making new employees feel welcome and valued.</p> <p>Topics covered in the corporate induction that support this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The History of Brisbane: discussing the history of Brisbane and the role the organisation's employees play. • The Big Picture: Identifying the apprentice/trainees position and value in the organisational structure. • Visions and Values: Recognising the cultural expectations and targets for all employees. • Code of Conduct: Providing guidelines to employees for acceptable standards and behaviours. • Generational Differences: Provides effective communication strategies between Gen X, Gen Y and Baby Boomers. • Participant support: Identifies support options available to all participants. • First Aid: Delivers certified basic first aid and resuscitation training. • Workplace Health and Safety: Details organisation's Zero Harm policy. • Contract sign up: Contract signing with the Australian Apprenticeships Centre.

Topics covered in the local induction are:

- Workplace Health And Safety: Site specific evacuation and safety procedures.
- Workplace introduction: Tour of facilities detailing locations of amenities and services.
- Workplace functions: Details roles of business and work performed.
- Staff introduction: Introduces apprentice/trainees to work team and local support network.

As part of the induction process, Australian Apprentices are brought back together as a group at the three month mark, to check any issues and to maintain the networks and knowledge built in the induction process.

Does your business/organisation have a training program?

formal and structured

Details:

The organisation introduces all Australian Apprentices to the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) that will deliver their formal training. During this meeting detailed training plans are developed in consultation with the participant, supervisor and the training organisation.

This meeting allows all parties to discuss deliverable training options that will provide outcomes suitable to all parties.

Performance of the RTO and the participant are monitored throughout the life of the program.

In recognition of how critical good Australian Apprentices are to the future of the organisation, the **“Growing the Future Workforce”** strategy has been initiated to ensure the sustained retention of current and past vocational participants. One of the major initiatives is structured vocational development sessions based around the lifecycle of apprentices or trainees.

Australian Apprentices attend the following vocational development sessions,

- Year 1: Personal and financial goal setting, superannuation, networking, TAFE expectations and evidence gathering.
- Year 2: Influencing yourself and others through effective communication.
- Year 3: Effective mentoring and communicating to junior Australian Apprentices.
- Year 4: Developing leadership skills, career guidance and self marketing. All 4th year Australian Apprentices have access to dedicated career guidance to assist in the transition into the tradesperson workforce.

Trainees attend the following development sessions,

- Communication styles and influencing
- Career planning
- Skill recognition
- Self marketing

Feedback from the sessions has been very positive, and apprentices and trainees appreciate the opportunity to network with other program participants and share experiences and knowledge.

Australian Apprentices who are completing or have recently completed their studies are eligible to apply for internal scholarships that offer additional training and development to the value of \$5000. Career plans are developed in consultation with participants, supervisors and career guidance officers.

Does your business/organisation provide your Australian Apprentice with learning resources?

Resources provided: staff manual, online access, procedure guides, policy guides, study time and other

Details:

The organisation endeavours to place the trainee/apprentice in a supportive work area and provide them with all the encouragement and resources required to successfully complete their qualification. The trainee/apprentice is supported by the following:

- induction manuals detailing internal and external support services available.
- access to online and written procedure and procedure guidelines.
- allocated paid study time.
- time allowances to attend internal and external training/development sessions.
- access to online learning and development programs (depending on learner needs).
- handouts and coaching manuals from development sessions.
- access, promotion and assistance applying for Tools for your Trade, Wage Top Up, Support for Mid Career Australian Apprentice, DAAWS, Living Away from Home Allowance, and Securing Traineeships Incentives.

The organisation understands the financial challenges that an apprentice or trainee may have and supports them by paying for 100% of the cost associated in gaining the qualification. This support covers the training fees from the registered training organisation and all related text books and stationery. Information technology support is provided in the form of internet/email access, printing and scanning facilities and data storage devices.

Does each Australian Apprentice have a designated support person?

Supervisor, colleague, coach and mentor

Details:

The organisation has dedicated support staff for all Australian Apprentices. At a corporate level the Vocational Development team includes:

- Project Leader - vocational strategy
- Participant Support Coordinator – personal and administrative support for participants and supervisors
- Program Support Officer - administrative support and contract maintenance.

The Vocational Development Team also maintains the Australian Apprentice Coordinator network. This network provides an opportunity for all divisional coordinators to meet and resolve work place issues, participant development, recruitment, procedure/policy and legislative changes that relate to apprentices and trainees.

The organisation has recently implemented career coaching as a new support and development opportunity for apprentices and trainees. The coaching sessions offer participants career pathways and development options on completion of their Australian Apprenticeship.

The individual business or work area must provide suitably qualified mentors for all apprentices and trainees. The mentors are responsible for providing all the “on the job” skills and unofficially provide life coaching and development for all participants. Apprentices and trainees are also given access to the Employee Assistance Program. This is a confidential service that provides emotional and psychological support for the participant and their families.



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What is in place for each Australian Apprentice to have an opportunity to provide input to and feedback on their training?
Regular formal meetings
<p>Details:</p> <p>Work areas conduct regular team/toolbox meetings where apprentices and trainees are encouraged to raise any issues or concerns in regards to their training and development. The divisions also arrange apprentice/trainee only meetings. These meetings enable the participants to provide constructive training feedback to their coordinators and workplace peers.</p> <p>All concerns and issues are forwarded to the Vocational Development Team and solutions are developed in consultation with the registered training organisation, the participant, work area, supervisors and Australian Apprenticeships Centre, if required.</p> <p>The Vocational Development Team provides feedback forms on completion of all vocational development sessions. Participants are encouraged to supply feedback on course content, venue suitability and the facilitator's skills and subject knowledge. Training feedback is collated and the data recorded to identify trends and areas for improvement.</p>

What is in place to assist your Australian Apprentice complete their training?
A formal arrangement
<p>Details:</p> <p>The organisation prides itself on being a leader in completion and retention rates for Australian Apprentices. This success is due to the supportive culture and recognition by all levels of management of the vital role apprentices and trainees play in our core business. Many trainees and apprentices value the importance of constructive feedback and performance assessments during their study. The participants are provided with numerous opportunities to sit with supervisors and coordinators to discuss expectations, outcomes, goals and work place performance. The performance reports offer the participant and employer the opportunity to develop and modify behavioural and learning styles to suit both parties.</p>



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The organisation appreciates that participants may encounter issues with their health, family and balancing work and life commitments, and therefore are provided with formal support avenues to assist them through these challenges. The support offered includes:

- Vocational Development Team
- Employee assistance program providing confidential emotional and psychological support for the participant and their families.
- Indigenous Employment programs providing suitably skilled staff in issues specific to Indigenous employees.
- Occupational Health providing assistance and rehabilitation for employees with long term injuries or illness.
- Zero Harm. A Zero Harm approach to managing workplace health and safety has been implemented
- Pre-employment feeder programs including Working On (Youth In Recovery) - supporting the rehabilitation of participants suffering from substance use, and Community Employment Programs- supporting participants from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The organisation has developed quality long term working relationships with the Australian Apprenticeships Centre, registered training organisations and industry partners. These relationships enable us to monitor potential issues and offer support and solutions that allow the participant to refocus on obtaining their qualification.

Supporting and recognising exceptional performance, the “Apprentice and Trainee of the Year” awards ceremony is held every year. These awards are recognised by the Lord Mayor and Chief Executive Officer. Award winners not only receive personal recognition, and awards donated by industry partners, they also have the possibility of gaining scholarships for increased learning opportunities and development.



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How does your business/organisation demonstrate EXCELLENCE as an employer of Australian Apprentices?

Excellence in career development

Background: Much of 2007 and 2008 year saw a strong economy driven by mining and infrastructure projects. All vocational areas had been in demand for some time and the organisation had been facing strong competition for new recruits and for retaining staff once they had completed their programs. The approach was to grow a capable workforce. This was dependent upon the ability to develop staff beyond industry standards and reward them with career opportunities to retain them. The "Growing the Future Workforce" initiative offers structured vocational development designed to accelerate technical, professional and leadership capabilities of our vocational employees. This development is in addition to training provided by the RTO's and is offered to all trainees and apprentices at key points throughout their traineeship or apprenticeship (covered in question 2).

The initiative is achieved through –

- a dedicated Vocational Development Team
- a structured Vocational Development Training Program
- linking existing programs to offer transitions and growth opportunities
- developing program support staff
- providing a specialist Blue Collar Career Guidance Officer
- implementing a Vocational Recruitment Team dedicated to attracting vocational starters (via career fairs, school visits, innovative advertising and employer branding)
- career guidance and individual assistance to bridge the gap from transitioning from the program into mainstream employment

Excellence in Recruitment

The organisation's innovative "Growing the Future Workforce" is inclusive of all vocational employment programs, rather than viewing trainees, Australian Apprentices, pre-employment, community programs and existing blue collar staff independently.

The organisation has not needed to advertise for entry level roles since the initiative has been in place. The vocational recruitment specialists have filled all Band 1 roles from the trainee pool creating permanent employment opportunities whilst relieving the cost and time of advertising and selecting. It is estimated this saves ratepayers \$18,000 per employee per year by transitioning trainees into these roles rather than employing agency staff. Linking pre-employment programs (such as Community Jobs Program, Working On - Youth in Recovery) to traineeships and apprenticeships give participants pathways and allows employment of staff who know the organisation and are already organisationally trained - therefore increasing productivity.



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Of the 96 Australian Apprenticeships recruited to date this financial year, 86 belong to the Youth, NESB, Indigenous or People with a Disability. In partnership with the State Government and Local Government Association of Queensland, the organisation was looking to recruit 50 subsidised trainees, however this has now renegotiated to increase this to 75. 50 were filled in the first 6 months. In addition, 40 new Australian Apprentices have been recruited this financial year.

An Olympic and Paralympic Development program by partnering with organisations such as QLD Olympic Council, Sporting Wheelies and QLD Academy of Sport, has also recently implemented. This program was developed as Olympians and Paralympians often experience difficulties finding meaningful employment as their high level sporting schedule can clash with work availability. However, as the organisation supports work /life balance of its employees, a program was developed where Olympians and Paralympians work part-time obtaining a qualification. Through a pilot program, four Olympic athletes and two paralympians commenced traineeships. Benefits of the program include a pool of goal orientated, focused and motivated future leaders and areas that didn't have a fulltime workload, can now fill vacancies.

By innovatively recruiting program participants, and linking pre-employment program participants to apprenticeship and traineeship vacancies, this employer has managed to retain skilled, diverse employees to fill current and future recruitment needs.

Excellence in Retention

Completion rate is 85% with over 80% being offered ongoing roles after completion. The employer is committed to maintaining these above industry results and building upon them through a range of retention strategies such as;

- *Vocational Development:* 183 participants have completed structured professional development with a satisfaction rate of 88%. Prior to the program, 40% of all third year Australian Apprentices indicated that they would exit upon completing their qualification. Since completing the program, all have indicated they wish to remain.
- *Consultative Performance Reviews:* Organisation encourages regular performance feedback between supervisors and their Australian Apprentices to keep the participant on track to succeed. The Vocational Development Team is available to assist both the supervisor and /or participant in achieving positive outcomes for any issues that arise from these sessions. This is in addition to regular visits to work areas, and other support mechanisms as outlined in question 4.

Career Pathways: Organisation encourages rotations to other work areas so its apprentices and trainees can learn a range of skills, use their skills in other environments and expose them to future internal job opportunities. Career guidance / career planning is offered to all participant so they are aware of career opportunities and develop options to achieve their goals.



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Excellence in development of Mentors / Team Leaders

The organisation recognises that development of its program participants is just as important as developing those who mentor and support them on a day to day basis. The following development and coaching is offered;

- 14 apprentice and trainee support staff completed Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment
- Attendance at corporate inductions; provided with information of managing generational differences and training expectations and obligations.
- Australian Apprentice Coordinators network and access to Vocational Development Team for support.
- Supervisor recognition by the Lord Mayor and CEO at the Apprentice and Trainee of the Year Awards

Excellence in Reward and Recognition

In March 2009, the 21st Apprentice and Trainee of the Year Awards were held. Over 65 apprentice or trainees were nominated in over 9 categories. The awards night and selection recognises achievement in a number of areas including customer service, team work, safety, innovation, application of learning and skills, and achievement of competencies / modules.

In addition, sixteen final year / recently completed apprentices and twelve trainees were nominated for \$5000 Accelerated Career Development Scholarships. This scholarship (which includes career guidance), recognises the employer's commitment to ongoing career development after the completion of the program. It is an important retention tool particularly for high achievers who may consider employment outside of the organisation.

In summary, the organisation is widely regarded as an employer of choice for Australian Apprentices and consistently seeks out opportunities to innovatively employ, develop and retain participants to achieve personal and business success.