

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

### Example of a winning application

<b>Business Category</b>	Resources & Infrastructure
How long have you been employing Australian Apprentices?	6 years

<b>Does your business/organisation have a planned induction process?</b>
<b>formal and structured</b>
<p><b>Details:</b></p> <p>This organisation has a thorough induction process which is designed to instruct and induct a new Australian Apprentice into the culture of the site, with a strong focus on safety. Before coming on site, the Australian Apprentices are required to undertake a 6 week pre-Apprenticeship program that will enhance their ability to be "work ready". This program covers the major trade areas including: electrical, automotive, plumbing, welding / fabrication and also has a strong focus on OH&amp;S and communication skills. This program is delivered by TAFE NSW.</p> <p>During this period, the new Australian Apprentices are introduced to the Australian Apprenticeships Centre (AAC) staff and are made aware of the legalities associated with their employment and Australian Apprenticeship. They are also advised of their rights and entitlements under the Australian Apprenticeship and encouraged to discuss any issues or concerns they may have with the AAC.</p> <p>The Australian Apprentices are also provided with, and given training in the use of, their Personnel Protective Equipment including high visibility uniforms, safety boots, safety glasses, hard hats, hearing protection and the numerous types of gloves that are required to be worn depending on the task and the environment.</p> <p>During their first week on site the Australian Apprentices attend the site Training Centre and undertake the following Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Site Induction</li> <li>• AECT (Actions Employees Can Take) (This training empowers staff to ensure they work safe)</li> <li>• See Stop Control (Task Management)</li> <li>• Concentrator Induction</li> <li>• Level 1 Isolation</li> <li>• Confined Spaces Level 1</li> </ul>

These inductions are tracked on the Training and Development system as evidence that they have undergone the inductions and to also flag the renewal dates for their annual re-induction program.

In addition to the formal inductions, the Australian Apprentices are introduced to their potential supervisors across the mine site, and are given a comprehensive tour of the complex facilities that exist across the two work sites so that they can form a good overview of the potential work areas. It also allows the new Australian Apprentices to develop an understanding of where they fit in to the organisational plan, and how their work impacts on other spheres of the operation.

Following the initial inductions, the Australian Apprentices are allocated to a section and work team based on their trade designation. That section is then responsible for ensuring that they undertake an area specific induction before they are allowed to work in that particular area. Their team supervisor then introduces the Australian Apprentice to his or her work team that they will be spending the first 6 months with.

The organisation ensures that the ratio of Australian Apprentices to tradesperson is never less than one tradesperson to an Australian Apprentice, and in reality there are often more than 3 tradespersons for each Australian Apprentice.

## Does your business/organisation have a training program?

### formal and structured

#### Details:

The organisation has a comprehensive and thorough training program mapped out for Australian Apprentices that encompasses all aspects of their progression through their Australian Apprenticeship until they qualify as a tradesperson. That training plan is oversights by the Australian Apprentice master who maintains the overall responsibility for the Australian Apprentices.

That Training program is designed to meet not only the formal aspects of the Australian Apprenticeship as they progress from year to year, it also incorporates planned internal and external training and development opportunities that are designed to increase the Australian Apprentices capacity to develop their mechanical skills as well as their communication, leadership and other life skills. Australian Apprentices are also encouraged to participate in Emergency Response Training, Community Development programs and Budgeting and Financial Awareness.

External training options are also programmed into the training plan to ensure that all Australian Apprentices are able to meet the full suite of competencies that are associated with their trade. That is, where it is determined that a particular competency may not be able to be met on site; arrangements are put into place to have an external company "Host" that Australian Apprentice to enable them to meet that competency. For example, there is a legislative requirement for general electricians to have also received on the job training in cottage and commercial wiring. Australian Apprentices are rotated off site with a Host for a minimum of a three month block with that company to enable them to get that experience.



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A domestic wiring booth, has been developed and modelled on the TAFE training booth which the Australian Apprentices are allocated training time to use, under supervision, which simulates domestic wiring issues. Similarly, fitter machinist's are rotated off site with Hosts to increase their machining skills. Mechanical apprentices, both heavy and light vehicle, are also rotated off site to gain experience and to complete their competencies. Heavy vehicle mechanics spend up to 3 months with other heavy vehicle companies whilst light vehicle mechanics spend time with selected companies to help them achieve their required competencies with petrol engines.

Australian Apprentices are also given the opportunities to work at other sites around Australia in the 4th year after completing their TAFE studies. All 4th year Australian Apprentices complete 42 days working at each site.

Following the completion of their TAFE studies at the end of their 3rd year, Australian Apprentices that have demonstrated the right attitude and commitment to their trade are also encouraged to apply for further study opportunities. Those opportunities include university degrees as well as dual trade options. Australian Apprentices have commenced Associate Degrees in Engineering and also Diplomas and Cert IV in Electrical Engineering. The majority of Australian Apprentices undertake additional trade qualifications in welding and fluid power.

Australian Apprentices are also able to complete work cover endorsed training to gain tickets in forklift, working at heights, dogman and crane courses.

## **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:**

All Australian Apprentices are given access to the internet and internal intranet sites.

The intranet portal contains all the information that might be required by an Australian Apprentice to carry out their day to day work. All policies and procedures relating to their employment, Safety and communication are available and can be accessed.

Australian Apprentices are encouraged to demonstrate initiative and good learning skills through seeking new information through a variety of sources including electronic, paper based manuals and through good questioning skills. All tasks that are performed on site have very specific procedures which must be understood and signed off before a task is commenced. All tasks are constantly reviewed and risk assessed to ensure that the task being undertaken has not changed due to environmental or other work conditions. The resources to undertake these checks and balances are all available to the Australian Apprentice to not only use, but to also contribute to any improvements found.



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All staff must attend a “Pass Meeting” (Positive Attitude Safety Systems) at the beginning of every shift to share information, comment upon the day’s events and to acknowledge and encourage positive reinforcement and safe working practices. Every team member is encouraged to participate fully at these meetings and it is a valuable resource which encourages learning and development.

Australian Apprentices are allowed training time, in addition to their normal TAFE requirements, to develop new skills, attend general training sessions, Health and Safety training and other courses related to their well being and development. The company adopts the attitude that Australian Apprentices are the future and it wants the best that can be trained.

All costs associated with the Australian Apprentices learning are covered by the company. When they have to travel for TAFE block release to other towns, all accommodation and living expenses are met.

All costs associated with texts and materials for their TAFE course are paid for. Each Australian Apprentice also receives, at the beginning of their Australian Apprenticeship, tool kits valued at over \$3000 to enable them to become a productive member of their team, and to also teach them the responsibilities of looking after and caring for their own equipment.

These tool kits are upgraded each year and as required. At the end of their Australian Apprenticeship, they have tool kits valued at around \$5000 which includes the Tools for Your Trade initiative of \$800; with the rest being invested by the company.

The organisation believes that by freeing the Australian Apprentices from any concerns or worries about costs and expenses, they are more able to devote their time and energies to their studies and learning.

## Does each Australian Apprentice have a designated support person?

### Supervisor, mentor, coach and other

#### Details:

This organisation has employed an Australian Apprentice master to develop and oversee the whole of the Australian Apprenticeship program. All Australian Apprentices report directly to that person regardless of what area they may be working in. However, the training and development of Australian Apprentices is a whole team approach.

The Australian Apprentice master allocates Australian Apprentices to particular work areas, and then rotates them through the different sites to ensure that they gain exposure to the whole of the mine site, both above and underground. When the Australian Apprentice is allocated to a particular work team, then that team leader takes on the role of mentor. They are provided with the necessary support to encourage their socialisation into the team, and to promote the best learning environment possible. Every tradesperson in the team is responsible for encouraging the Australian Apprentices growth and learning capabilities.

Inductions that all staff undertake include "Actions Employees Can Take". This program is designed specifically to make every employee aware of their rights and responsibilities to themselves and their workmates and to encourage people to speak up in respect of any issues that they see. It is a valuable tool that empowers staff to act in accordance with the values that are an integral part of the company's business culture.

The Australian Apprentice master visits the Australian Apprentices in their work situations on a regular basis, and also maintains a strong relationship with the TAFE colleges by regularly attending the TAFE when the Australian Apprentices are present and by conducting regular reviews of their performance with the teaching staff.

On a day to day basis, the Australian Apprentices are placed in a discreet work team with a number of tradesperson and supervisors. Each tradesperson acts as the Australian Apprentice's mentor in respect of responding to issues, developing their learning skills and, where required, providing advice and support on other matters.

Australian Apprentices are also able to contact the staff at the AAC for any assistance and support that they may require with their Australian Apprenticeship.



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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

#### Details:

Australian Apprentices have access to the Australian Apprentice master as required. This open door policy allows them to have time to discuss any issues relating to their work, training or personal issues they may have.

“Pass Meetings” are held on a daily basis before each shift to hand over to the incoming shift. These meetings encourage staff to put forward their ideas and suggestions. This meeting is a formal process with the specific format designed to explore, encourage and stimulate participants to reflect on their work. It provides opportunities for positive reinforcement to be given, reflect on issues and incidents and move forward with work improvements and safety. These meetings are supplemented by Tool Box meetings which are more intimate in that they focus on a team, its achievements and challenges. Contributions from all members of the team about aspects of the team’s performance, including learning and development are covered.

The Australian Apprentice master visits all of the Australian Apprentices at their TAFE block releases, to give them an opportunity away from the worksite, to discuss any issues or concerns that they might have with their training and development, both on the job and at TAFE. This interaction allows for early intervention and additional support that may be required to be quickly implemented. Outstanding performance at TAFE is formally recognised by the awarding of framed certificates and vouchers to our gift shop, where the recipient’s choose gifts. These certificates and gift vouchers are presented to the Australian Apprentices at meetings in front of their whole shift so that their value and contributions are widely recognised.

The company has adopted a number of processes for ensuring continual improvement, including the Lean Six Sigma program. All staff are encouraged to demonstrate initiative and problem solving skills by contributing to the continual improvement process. They do so in the knowledge that all suggestions are valued and treated with respect.

The Australian Apprentices are appraised on a monthly basis by their team supervisor which is passed on to the Australian Apprentice master for review. At that time, the Australian Apprentices are also encouraged to contribute to a “Feed Forward” process rather than necessarily looking backwards at past events. The focus is on moving forward and changing behaviours rather than reflecting on past actions.

These reviews are discussed with the Australian Apprentice master on a formal 6 monthly review which is entered into a performance system. This process is both a feed up and feedback forum where the Australian Apprentice is encouraged to comment upon the training and development he/she has received as well as supervision.

Every 3-4 months, a general Australian Apprentice meeting is held where all staff get together to discuss issues relating to their work, supervision and training. This meeting has a prepared agenda including an open forum and action items are recorded and given time frames for action. Feedback is given to the meeting on past action items.



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## What is in place to assist your Australian Apprentice complete their training?

### A formal arrangement

#### Details:

The organisation believes the Australian Apprenticeships program adds value to the company and contributes to the overall success, not only from an intrinsic company view, but also to the continuing success and development of the local community.

The structured approach to the employment of 10 to 12 junior Australian Apprentices every year and, demonstrated commitment to each of their success has ensured that an unparalleled retention and completion rate of 96% since the program commenced is maintained.

A number of factors have contributed to that outstanding achievement, and one of those is the commitment of the company to ensure that its Australian Apprentices receive every encouragement to not only complete, but to be the very best that they can.

The selection process at the very beginning of the Australian Apprentice's journey is also a contributing factor to this success. Public information sessions are held to inform applicants and their parents about all aspects of the Australian Apprenticeship including training, shifts, safety, security and fit for work processes. The company recognises that when parents are actively involved and fully informed about the jobs their children are applying for, they in turn are able to contribute to their children's success.

The General Manager of the company is available for these public sessions and many of his senior staff are also present to make themselves known to the parents and the applicants and to answer any questions that may arise. This process is repeated further into the recruitment process when the final number of applicants that are to be interviewed have been identified. In all 850 to 900 applications are received annually for these sought after positions.

During the year leading up to recruitment, the Australian Apprentice master, at the request of careers advisors, is also pro-active in travelling to schools in the region to not only talk about careers in the industry, but also to assist future applicants with their resumes and interview techniques.

The candidates are drawn from the local communities and other smaller towns in the vicinity. This commitment to community development by giving local youth opportunities for work has also contributed to our success in retaining our Australian Apprentices. They are then well supported through the AAC with government allowances for Living Away From Home when required.



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

This organisation's outstanding demonstration of excellence as an employer of Australian Apprentices is the completion and retention rate. Since the program began in 2002 there has been a 96% completion rate with only 1 Australian Apprentice not completing with the company. When they have completed, the Australian Apprentices continue employment with the company.

Since commencing the program, the organisation has employed 53 Australian Apprentices with an ongoing commitment to employ a further 10 to 12 new Australian Apprentices each year. At the present time, there are 41 across all stages of the trade areas including heavy vehicle, light vehicle, electrical, fabrication/welding, auto electrical and fitting & machining.

The employment of an Australian Apprentice master to develop training plans and to oversee the Australian Apprentices learning and development throughout their 4 years is evidence of a strong commitment to ensure that they not only complete their Australian Apprenticeship but that they also become the very best tradesperson they can be.

The organisation demonstrates a strong commitment to furthering local community development in many ways, through donations to community programmes, developing and fostering schools programs and also through its employment and its Australian Apprenticeships program for young people in the local districts. It has recognised that by addressing the skills shortage with competent trained tradespeople, it can secure growth and productivity into the future.

The organisation demonstrates ongoing support to its Australian Apprentices through extensive internal and external development programs and opportunities that are incorporated in their individual training plans. Partnerships are developed with selected Host companies to train Australian Apprentices in all facets of their trade and to ensure that they comply with Legislative requirements at the end of their Australian Apprenticeship. Each Australian Apprentice is rotated every 6 months between the various operations that are carried out on site. These rotations improve the overall knowledge of the whole mining operation, and also broaden the reliability of the assessment feedback on the Australian Apprentices given to the Australian Apprentice master.

When an area of concern relating to training is identified, either by the Australian Apprentice or master, the tradesman are committed to supporting that person through difficulties with extra tuition and training. There are many examples where a tradesperson has given their time and expertise freely to assist the apprentices grasp a skill or principle relating to their work.

An intensive rotation programme for the 4th Years to other sites in Australia is also conducted. These Australian Apprentices are supported to spend over a month in both other sites so that they get experience at different sites and also to experience the fly in / fly out program of employment whilst living on site.



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The Australian Apprentice Training program focuses on the Australian Apprentices life skills development as well as their mechanistic skills. It includes development in leadership, communication and financial management. They are encouraged to contribute to community development through various programs. For example, an Australian Apprentice Road Safety group has been established to develop in partnership with government safety groups, a program to increase driver awareness in learner drivers.

The recruitment process undertaken each year ensures that candidates and their parents are fully informed about all facets of the process, and that they are confident that their children are going into a safe, secure and viable future. Public information meetings are held and the General Manager, other Senior managers and Superintendants are involved.

A series comprising of at least two rounds of interviews are conducted to select final candidates. Those final candidates are put through a 6 week pre-apprenticeship course. Psychometric Testing with personality profiles are administered to each final candidate with regular monitoring of the candidates during their Pre-apprenticeship course is carried out.

The organisation ensures that it receives ongoing feedback in respect of :

- Training and development,
- The ability to access resources,
- The pursuit of worthwhile career options, The ability to undertake additional training and development

The feedback provided by these strategies and opportunities ensures that this organisation continues to provide an excellent training ground for Australian Apprentices.