

SPECIAL FEATURE

# NATIONAL SKILLS WEEK

August 29 - September 4, 2016

**Meet  
Australia's  
new skill  
leaders  
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**Why the  
dining boom  
is big news  
for job  
seekers  
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# Your recipe for success

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# Expand your job horizons

With widespread skill shortages, there are plenty of reasons to consider vocational education, writes **Polly Simons**

NATIONAL Skills Week kicks off on Monday, highlighting the many opportunities offered by vocational education and encouraging people to learn more about the career paths it provides.

According to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, about 4.5 million people were enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) across Australia in 2015, of which about 278,600 of these were apprentices and trainees.

“A lot of people don’t understand the diversity of careers that vocational education and training offers,” says Kirstin Casey, general manager of SkillsOne, which is driving the annual event in partnership with stakeholders.

Considering a hands-on career? Here are five reasons to take a vocational approach.

## Your skills are in demand

If it’s a job with a future you want, a traineeship or apprenticeship could be the answer.

According to recruitment company Hays, qualified tradies are currently spoilt for choice when it comes to jobs, thanks to the huge number of transport and infrastructure projects taking place around the country.

“Carpenters, in particular, are in increasingly short supply, while general and civil labourers, electricians, plumbing workers and sheet metal workers are in solid demand,” says Adam Shapley, senior regional director of Hays Trades and Labour.

It’s not just tradies either. The NSW Skills Shortages List includes jobs such as childcare centre managers, early childhood teachers, surveyors, chefs, butchers and cabinet makers, while Australia’s rapidly ageing population means more than 300,000 new aged-care workers will be needed by 2020.

## Turn your interests into a career

With more than 500 occupations ranging from boat building to interior design, one of the biggest advantages of vocational education is it lets you parlay your interests into a career.

“It means you don’t have to separate your career and your passion,” says Casey. “We had one student who loved motorbikes, so he did a motorcycle mechanic school-based apprenticeship and now he is a spokesperson for vocational education and does what he loves by working in the industry.”



## NATIONAL SKILLS WEEK

**What:** Recognising and celebrating the value, diversity, benefits and career pathways associated with Vocational Education and Training (VET)  
**When:** August 29-September 4, 2016  
**Where:** Events and activities happening nationally  
**More:** [nationalskillsweek.com.au](http://nationalskillsweek.com.au)

Construction workers are among the most in-demand tradespeople in NSW, along with motor mechanics, chefs and pastry cooks (below).

**It’s a good choice because it gives you practical skills and accredited training, often in an area where there’s a skill shortage.**

**JAMES MORAN**  
 APPRENTICE SUPPORT AUSTRALIA

Other possibilities include music lovers studying music production or becoming a sound engineer, while aspiring fashionistas could study fashion design or millinery.

“Often parents and kids don’t understand the range of different options VET offers,” says Casey. “It gives you a solid set of skills, you’re work-ready and you’re well on your way to a qualification.”

## Start while you’re at school

If you already have a clear idea of what you want to do, the VET in Schools program and TAFE’s TVET program let students start their traineeship while still at school and graduate well on their way to a qualification. Better yet, both programs count towards your final HSC marks and, if you opt for a School-Based Apprenticeship, you may even earn a wage for the days you work on-site.

“VET programs for secondary students provide an opportunity to ‘try out’ interests that students may have for certain industries before they leave school and make decisions regarding their career and study pathways,” says Liliana Mularczyk, director of secondary education at the NSW Department of Education.

On-the-job training will also give you the sort of work-ready skills employers value highly, such as punctuality, communication and teamwork. Even if you eventually decide to study something else, these skills will still give you the edge on the competition.

## Start earning straight away

If you’re keen to earn a wage while also building the skills and qualifications you need to succeed, an apprenticeship or traineeship is the way forward. “It’s a good choice because it gives you practical skills and accredited training, often in an area where there’s a skill shortage,” says James Moran, general manager of Apprentice Support Australia.

“Even if you’re doing TVET, you’re getting paid for the days you work and you’re already a step ahead to getting into the industry,” he says.

Most apprentices are expected to attend off-the-job training at a TAFE or a Registered Training Organisation as well as working on-site, with most full-time apprentices earning around \$600 a week in their first year and up to \$1000 in their final year.

“You usually attend TAFE one day or a half day a week, so you could be applying at work what you learnt at TAFE that morning,” says Moran.

## Take your career in any direction

Australian VET qualifications are among the best in the world, and the practical nature of trades makes it possible to take them almost everywhere — whether that’s the grand cities of Europe or the beaches of Bali.

Even better, many of the trades on the skills shortage list in Australia are on similar lists overseas, meaning you’ll probably be welcomed with open arms.

Alternatively, many of the skills covered in apprenticeships lend themselves perfectly to starting up your own business.

“You might start out doing your Plumbing Certificate III then decide you want to go out on your own so you do a Certificate IV in Small Business,” says Moran.

You can even use your qualifications as a precursor to university. “It’s by no means the end of the line,” he says.

“Apprenticeships have an image problem; people think it’s either an apprenticeship or university, but you can do both.”

## CAREERS IN DEMAND

These are the skills most in demand in NSW, according to the Department of Employment:

**Education:** Childcare centre managers, early childhood teachers

**Engineering, science and transport:** Surveyors, quantity surveyors

**Health:** Sonographers, optometrists, midwives, registered nurses

**Automotive and engineering trades:** Automotive electricians, motor mechanics, sheet metal workers, metal machinists, locksmiths, panel beaters, vehicle painters

**Construction and building:** Bricklayers, stonemasons, painting trades workers, glaziers, plasterers, tilers, cabinet makers

**Electrotechnology:** Airconditioning and refrigeration mechanics

**Hospitality:** Butchers, chefs, pastry cooks



# Cream of the crop to face off

Apprentices, trainees and students will fight for a WorldSkills Competition team spot, writes **Polly Simons**

ARMED with everything from hammers to hairdryers, Australia's best young workers will descend on Melbourne Showground from October 6-8 to take part in the country's biggest trades and skills competition.

Featuring more than 500 young apprentices, trainees and students from across Australia, the WorldSkills Australia National Competition pits competitors from 60 skill areas – including automotive services, construction, computing, hospitality and engineering – against each other for the chance to represent Australia at the international WorldSkills Competition to be held in Abu Dhabi next year.

"The competition is about the best of the best competing against like-minded people," says WorldSkills Australia chief executive Brett Judd.

Over three days, the competitors will be tested on creativity, speed or accuracy as they complete a project or

show off their skills.

At last year's international competition in Sao Paulo, Australia was ranked 12th, and the pressure is on this year's crop of participants to maintain those high standards for next year's event. "The people who come back are often very different to the ones that went in," says Judd.

With more than 40,000 people expected to attend over the three days, Judd also believes the competition is a vital way of raising awareness of the advantages and value of trades.

"Over the next 30 days, we'll be bringing home Olympians with gold medals around their necks, but what, if anything, will they contribute to the economic growth of Australia?" he says.

"These competitors will be the future business leaders of Australia. People can come along and see them and see the benefits of vocational education and that's a really powerful tool."



Julianna Kettyle will compete in the Retail Baking - Pastry division of the WorldSkills Australia national competition.

## Pastry chef aims for sweet spot

**JULIANNA KETTYLE**

**Category: Retail baking - Pastry**  
**Game plan: Be in the zone**

IT'S just as well Julianna Kettyle is a pastry whiz, given she has no career Plan B. "This was always the only thing I wanted to do," the 20-year-old from Albury says. "I love how you can create anything out of sweet food and how you can make your own twist on things."

Kettyle completed her Certificate III in Retail Baking through Wodonga TAFE last year and now juggles her WorldSkills training with her apprenticeship at Geoffrey Michael Patisserie in Albury, where she has set up a competition-ready bench space and regularly pits herself against the clock.

"I really enjoy working with chocolate as it's a bit more challenging than some of the other areas," she says.

Over the three days of competition, Kettyle will be required to show off these skills as well as create favourites such as fruit flans and petit fours, a gingerbread house and marzipan modelling.

Mental preparation is also on the menu. "I'll probably freak out with excitement and then calm down," she says. "I'm going to try and be in the zone and not over-think it too much."

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Kay-Lee Howlett is an apprentice beauty therapist and WorldSkills Australia competitor.

## Making life beautiful

**KAY-LEE HOWLETT**  
**Category: Beauty Therapy**  
**Game plan: Give everything**

FOR Kay-Lee Howlett, WorldSkills training has been so much more than simply fine-tuning her skills. It also helped her meet one of her closest friends.

"I was initially so scared to go to the training camp in Tamworth, but I met a hairdresser there and now we speak almost every day," the 20-year-old says.

The Katoomba local will relish the opportunity to catch up with her friend as well as showcase her skills when she demonstrates her massage, makeup and pedicure skills as part of the competition.

"There's definitely mixed

emotions; I'm both excited and nervous," Howlett says.

She has big dreams. After finishing her Diploma of Beauty Therapy through the Blue Mountains campus at TAFE Western Sydney Institute last year, she enrolled in a Diploma of Makeup and Upstyling and hopes to open a one-stop wedding shop in Katoomba with her mum, who is also studying beauty therapy.

In May, she was inundated with calls after being named Student of the Year – Hairdressing and Beauty at the TAFE Western Sydney Student Excellence Awards, and she hopes a win in Melbourne will lead to more.

"I'm going to give it everything I've got," she says.

## Success lies in a firm focus on finer details

**TYRUS SHAY**  
**Category: Jewellery**  
**Game plan: Take it all in his stride**

WHEN Tyrus Shay discovered his mother's childhood rock collection, it started a life-long interest in jewellery.

"I'd always had affection for working with my hands, and when I was a child, I found the collection she'd gathered walking on the beach near where she grew up. She took me to a local lapidary club and from there I became interested in silver smithing," the 22-year-old says.

"I love the filing, the hammering, the emotion-stirring

part of creating jewellery."

Last year, the Campbelltown local finished his Certificate III in Jewellery Manufacture at the Design Centre in Enmore (part of TAFE Sydney Institute) and now works full-time at jeweller Diamond Design by Jason Ree on George St as well as juggling competition training.

"The biggest challenge is speed, getting the balance between the amount of time it takes to get something perfect and getting my speed up," he says. "I'm hoping to take it all in my stride."

"As soon as you start looking at other people, you get out of your head."



Tyrus Shay is an apprentice jeweller and WorldSkills Australia competitor. Picture: John Fotiadis



Mitchell Baird is an apprentice carpenter and WorldSkills Australia competitor.

## Timing is everything to get job done

**MITCHELL BAIRD**  
**Category: Carpentry**  
**Game plan: Be prepared**

WHEN it comes to competition, Mitchell Baird believes you can't ever be too organised.

In preparation for the competition, in which Baird will create, design and build a three-post gazebo, the 19-year-old from Campbelltown has been training weekly with his teachers at the Macarthur Building Industry Skills Centre in Ingleburn (part of TAFE's South Western Sydney Institute) and working hard to nail his time-management strategies before the big day.

"We've broken down the task into hours so that I know what I need to do every hour to get the job done," says Baird.

Carpentry was a natural choice for Baird, who is now in the third year of his apprenticeship. "I've always been good with my hands, and I like working on something from start to finish" he says.

Next year he will embark on a Certificate IV in Building and Construction. "I'd like to have my own business, with decent crew, doing what I'm doing now and building homes from scratch," he says.



Young spray paint apprentice Megan Riley.

## From pocket money to professional kudos

**MEGAN RILEY**  
**Category: Vehicle painting**  
**Game plan: Do your best**

MEGAN Riley is used to being the only woman at automotive refinishing competitions. "At all of them, I have never met another girl, except for once when colour matching," says the 22-year-old from Eastwood, who last year finished her Certificate III in Automotive Refinishing at TAFE Sydney Institute.

Not surprisingly, she came across the career almost by accident when, after leaving school, she signed up to work as a detailer for Pymble Repair Centre to earn a bit of pocket money and work out what she wanted to do next.

"When I was starting out, I was hired to wash cars and I started doing a little bit of paintwork," she says.

Initially treated as a bit of a novelty, since starting her apprenticeship she has gone from strength to strength, including being named the Central and Northern Sydney Apprentice of the Year at the NSW Training Awards last month.

"I love seeing the cars coming in all smashed up and our guys would get to work on it and it would go out looking brand new," she says. For now, however, her focus is firmly on the chance to add another prize to her tally in Melbourne.

"My plan is not to worry about anything," she says. "I can only do my best."

## Chef cooks up a grand plan to claim victory

**BILLY FOX**  
**Category: Cookery**  
**Game plan: Just breathe**

IF YOU think surviving a *MasterChef* pressure test is impressive, just imagine doing it for three days straight – and in front of an audience of more than 40,000 people. That's what Figtree chef Billy Fox will need to do when he takes to the stage in Melbourne.

"I'm just going to try and keep breathing – sometimes you get so caught up in things and you need to take a step back," says the 19-year-old.

It's a far cry from his first cooking memory, watching his grandmother make a lemon meringue pie. "I was watching her making the meringue and how you can make something so amazing from a few simple ingredients," he says.

He hasn't looked back since, completing his apprenticeship through the hotel and his Certificate III in Commercial Cookery from Illawarra TAFE. Last year, he travelled to Singapore on a TAFE NSW scholarship to work at one of its top restaurants, while earlier this year he spent two months in Cambodia helping locals improve their diet, hygiene and housing.

For now, though, his attention is completely focused on the competition, juggling long hours in kitchen of Wollongong's Sage Hotel with more hours perfecting his chosen dishes under the guidance of his WorldSkills mentors at Illawarra TAFE.

"I've been picking all their brains for information," he says.



Billy Fox will compete in the Commercial Cookery division.



Industry forecasts reveal the demand for hospitality workers is only going to increase.

# Smorgasbord of career pathways

**LAURA CENCIGH-ALBULARIO**

A DINING boom has replaced Australia's mining boom, and employers are hungry for hospitality workers.

The cafe, restaurant and takeaway sector employs more than twice as many people as mining, says a Restaurant and Catering Australia report, with numbers also exceeding banking and agriculture. With 565,700 workers, hospitality is the largest employer of all tourism-related industries which, combined, employ almost one million people.

These figures are set to ramp up in coming years as tourism soars as one of Australia's top five super growth industries. Last year's number of international visitors grew more than 8 per cent, three times faster than its growth rate in the previous 15 years, and domestic visitation also made a healthy leap.

The tourism industry is already struggling to keep up, with a shortfall of 38,000 staff. It will need an extra 123,000 workers by 2020, according to a Deloitte Access Economics report, with almost 70 per cent of businesses reporting difficulty in finding skilled workers.

This challenge is most pronounced in cafes

and restaurants, with kitchenhands, waiters, bar attendants and baristas topping the shortage list, followed by chefs and restaurant managers.

A low Australian dollar, and strengthening Asian economies, are significant factors in the tourism boom, and Australia has welcomed more than one million Chinese visitors in the past year. Food is a big drawcard for these visitors, says Restaurant and Catering Australia spokesperson Carlita Warren.

"They're sticklers for quality, which means good staff are like gold in our industry," she says. "Front-of-house skills are increasingly important and the challenge is that without the right staff, service levels decline noticeably."

As demand for hospitality workers rises, so too does the challenge of convincing more people to consider the sector for their career.

Without a sufficient Australian workforce,

**If you get the right training, you're never going to be out of work.**

**MICHAEL BENNETT**  
HTN CHIEF EXECUTIVE

hospitality heavily relies on transient overseas workers on 457 visas to fill the gap. According to SkillsOne general manager Kirstin Casey, the flow-on effect is businesses are left without a pipeline of workers to promote through the ranks to positions such as head chef or restaurant manager. "People think working in a restaurant or in fast food is only something you do while you're studying or waiting for something else, but there are pathways that can lead to a brilliant career," she says.

Reality television shows such as *MasterChef* are helping to change perceptions. Chefs, in particular, are gaining hero status, with *MasterChef* host and restaurateur George Calombaris even being painted for this year's Archibald Prize. But it's not just top chefs who can make it big. Internationally, several countries have long viewed service as an art form and the basis for a fulfilling career. "It's a notable job to be a restaurant manager, sommelier or head waiter in places like France and Italy," Warren says. "People are proud of their jobs and we want (jobs in hospitality) to become aspirational jobs here too."

A range of apprenticeships are already available for people wanting to perfect their service skills, and Restaurant and Catering

Australia is working on a Certificate IV in Waiting to reflect the growing demand for service excellence.

While perceptions may be slow to change, there are already plenty of Australian success stories. Charlie Bell, who started flipping hamburgers at McDonald's at 15, is a well-known example. Having opened his own restaurant at 19, he went on to become the company's youngest CEO. More recently, Sydney restaurant service professional Jessica Martin won silver in the 2013 WorldSkills International competition in Germany, and has since become a restaurant manager.

Michael Bennett, CEO of apprentice chef employer HTN, encourages school-leavers and career changers to use National Skills Week as a chance to research and explore hospitality career paths and the types of apprenticeship available. "If you get the right training, you're never going to be out of work," he says.

Along with training, being prepared for hard work is an essential ingredient. "It isn't a job, it's a lifestyle," Bennett says. "It's fast-paced, dynamic and will probably involve working nights and weekends, but if you're passionate about food and work hard, you'll be rewarded with limitless opportunities."



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**ADAM'S TOP TIPS**

**Live and breathe it**

"Read, watch TV, follow social media and be aware of what goes on around you to stay informed about hospitality trends here and overseas."

**Aim to please**

"Food is about sharing and putting something on the table that helps people create beautiful memories. Whether you're a chef, waiter, barman or barista, you're part of that, so focus on making people happy, and be proud of what you do. You'll make mistakes, but the important thing is how you dissect them to make it better next time."

**Be open-minded**

"It's such a big industry and, if you have a passion for food, it doesn't have to just be about cooking. You might end up being a food stylist, or there are restaurant managers, baristas, sommeliers and operations managers. You could end up with one of the big food brands in development, sales and marketing, or in the factory."

**Try it out**

"Get work experience in your local bakery, butcher, deli or cafe. You'll gain some great skills and knowledge and it shows that you've taken initiative. Listen, watch, get in there, get dirty and don't be afraid to ask questions."



# Family offers early lessons in joy of food

SOME of Adam Swanson's earliest childhood memories are of eating fresh cheese in his grandparents' kitchen.

Now a celebrity chef, restaurant owner and brand ambassador for San Remo pasta, Swanson credits his passion for food and his work ethic to his family, who ran a cheese-making business from the back of his Italian-born grandparents' house in Adelaide.

"My parents would get us up at 2am, take us to our grandparents' house and put us back to sleep while they made cheese," says Swanson.

"We'd wake up and eat fresh cheese and then the delivery driver would take us to school. I saw how hard my mum and dad had to work, but also understood how great food brings people together."

Swanson did a pre-vocational course in commercial cookery, volunteered at his local butcher, baker and fishmonger and left school in Year 11 to do a four-year cooking apprenticeship.

"Getting that apprenticeship was my first dream and, at 17, I was working 60 or 70 hours a week while a lot of my friends were still at high school," Swanson says.

By the time he was in his mid-20s he had opened his first restaurant, Zucca in Adelaide, which he now balances with his new Sydney restaurant, Lot. 1 Sydney on York St.

Swanson's success led him to star in five seasons of cooking show *Ready Steady Cook* and he recently filmed the second season of his own cooking series, *Adam's Pasta Pilgrimage in Italy*.

Chef Adam Swanson has created a thriving food empire, including restaurants in both Sydney and Adelaide.

Photo: Nick Clayton

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