



Australian Government

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Nutting out training needs

Macadamia Processing Co. Ltd

Hunter and North Coast region



Australian Apprentices are at the kernel of Macadamia Processing Co. Ltd (MPC), the largest producer of macadamias in the world. More than 180 Australian macadamia growers in North Eastern New South Wales and South East Queensland own MPC.

The company has about 190 employees. Seventy-three are newly graduated Australian Apprentices with Certificates II or III in Food Processing and 20 are now completing their Certificate II in Food Processing

Supervisor of Safety and Training Allen Holmes says three years ago the company saw the need to develop and improve training and align it with national competencies. Their aim was to increase the number of qualified staff by 10 per cent each year.

MPC developed partnerships with Tursa Employment and Training and Central West Community College Australian Apprenticeship Centre, which enabled them to link MPC in-house training to Certificate II and III in Food Processing.

Central West Community College Manager Peter Gilchrist applauds MPC's commitment to training.

'I have been privileged to see the training programs in many companies but few have impressed me as much as MPC,' Peter says.

'They have a genuine desire to invest in their people, encourage them to improve their skills through training and give opportunities for development and progression within the organisation.'

Many of MPC's Australian Apprentices are from non-English speaking backgrounds and a wide age range, so training is tailored to individual needs.

'We have a real mix of people here and they range in age from 17 to 71. Our 71 year old was a trainee last year. She was down there doing her duties as a nut sorter and we thought, why not put her through the training as well? And now she has completed Certificate III in Food Processing,' Allen says.

Because of the seasonal nature of the work, MPC negotiated a shorter training time and integrated training into day-to-day work to assist Australian Apprentices in completing their training.

'We can complete the required training in seven months instead of the normal 12 months due to MPC's well-structured training. We do have people that commence later in the year but we put them through the same training process so that next year, returning employees have already completed some of the requirements of the Certificate II in Food Processing.'

The large number of graduating Australian Apprentices demonstrates that MPC's good training strategies are working.

'It's little things, like making sure that the apprentices with low English or literacy levels are given verbal instructions and tuition and matching mentors from similar backgrounds with apprentices that make the program successful. We have Leading Hands who become mentors and who are there for that day-to-day supervision and tuition,' Allen says.

MPC really sees the benefit of having Australian Apprentices as a big part of its strategy to develop and improve the Australian macadamia industry.

'By investing in apprentices, it puts value into jobs. Employees appreciate MPC's commitment and see themselves as valued and skilled workers,' Allen says.

