



Australian Government

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Macmahon apprentices going places

Macmahon Contractors

Perth region



Australian Apprentices at Macmahon Contractors gain a well-rounded experience. Those based at the company's purpose-built workshop in Perth service mining and construction equipment and get the chance to work at mine sites around Australia.

'We are different,' says Apprentice Coordinator Jason Cullen.

'Our apprentices go to mine sites as second or third-year apprentices and some even go overseas. For example, this year we've had six apprentices go to Indonesia and Malaysia.'

Deyaana Kerbelker, Account Manager at CCI EmployFAST Perth, says Australian Apprentices have an exceptional level of support.

'A lot of apprentices are young, straight out of school. They have courses to help them out with life lessons,' Deyaana says.

'Macmahon also pays for additional courses through RTOs—like Certificate II qualifications in air-conditioning and tyre fitting throughout the apprenticeship—to make apprentices more employable.

'They have had over a 90 per cent completion rate, so that says a lot about Macmahon Contractors too. That's got a lot to do with Jason being there to support them when they need it.'

As Apprentice Coordinator for Macmahon's sites around the country, Jason meets each Australian Apprentice weekly to make sure they get the necessary help on the job.

'We're very one-on-one—apprentices are not a number,' Jason says.

'I'm always there for them, 24/7. They know they can ring me at 5 am and say "Jason, do I still get the same money if I change duties?"—and they do! But that's what creates a better relationship with apprentices.'

Jason says seeing Australian Apprentices finish their qualifications is incredibly rewarding. And the relationship doesn't end there—he's often invited to their weddings, or sees them go on to start families.

Jason's commitment to training has continued, even during the global economic downturn, but this meant some creative thinking to keep Australian Apprentices on.

'We went from having 12 sites in Western Australia to having six, so that meant we had a lot of apprentices who weren't out on site,' he says.

'So we held more training courses with outside contractors or myself, rather than having apprentices standing around doing nothing. We also thought what if we send guys out and don't charge the sites; our apprentices can continue their experience.'

Macmahon is also giving current Australian Apprentices a head start during difficult economic times by fast-tracking their qualifications.

'All our fourth-year apprentices are finishing early,' Jason says.

'Out of 30, only four aren't finished yet. They'll all finish their apprenticeships and get full-time jobs, which in a downturn, is great.'

It's all part of Macmahon's commitment to Australian Apprentices. Jason says it's a win-win situation and providing opportunities for people to gain a trade is essential.

'If we don't develop our skills base we'll just go round in circles,' he says.

'We might be in a downturn but if we don't have skills we won't get out. The best way to build that skill base is with your Australian Apprentices.'

