

NCI Podcast – Jake Carter

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WOMAN	Welcome to the National Careers Institute podcast. In this series, we'll hear from some former VET graduates and learn about the pathway they took to get the careers they wanted. Vocational Education and Training is a great way to start, change or boost your career, and there's no time like the present to explore your options. Visit yourcareer.gov.au to find out how to take the next step in your career. And now here's your host, Australia's National Careers Ambassador, Scott Cam.
SCOTT	Thanks for joining us. And on behalf of the National Careers Institute, welcome to our podcast series. If you haven't heard our chats with some of our other VET graduates, make sure you have a listen. Our guest today is Australian VET alumni Jake Carter, from spreadsheets to sparky. This is a guy who thought he might have bitten off more than he could chew, but it turns out he just kept on chewing and proved that hard work and determination really are the keys to success. G'day, Jake Carter. How are you, mate?
JAKE	Great, thanks.
SCOTT	That's the way. Now, you had a perfectly good office job in finance. What on earth made you decide to step away from the desk and study to become a sparky - which is a great trade, by the way?
JAKE	Um, look, I didn't know what I wanted to study or what trade I wanted to go into, but I knew I needed to find something that challenged me and something that was going to be different every day. So, after a bit of research and a couple of visits to trade schools, I enrolled in a pre-vocational, which is a pre-apprenticeship course, to be an electrician.
SCOTT	Yeah, right, so that's the...you did the Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician, and then you... that was your pre-apprenticeship. And then you found yourself a host. Is that how it worked? Is that how you went through your pathway?
JAKE	Yep, so Certificate II first. So that was my pre-apprenticeship 3- to 4- month course.
SCOTT	Yep.
JAKE	I think it's on the free trade course list at the moment. So, what a great opportunity. It wasn't, obviously, when I took it on. And once I found myself a host employer, I then enrolled in my Certificate III for the 4-year apprenticeship.
SCOTT	Yeah, fantastic, mate. And I hear your big career change wasn't the only thing going on for you at the time either, was there? There was something big else happening in your family.
JAKE	Yeah, so, uh, after I'd already made the change, it was too late to go backwards, we found out we were pregnant, having our first child. So, that was during the 3-month or 4-month full-time pre-apprenticeship course. So a lot of thinking had to re-happen and just lucky for the support I had to keep going. And I'm lucky I did, looking back at it now, but very daunting at the time.
SCOTT	Yeah, so you faced a drop in pay, unknown job prospects, you weren't sure whether you were going to get an apprenticeship at the time, but you made the decision to go on anyway. You backed yourself, didn't you?
JAKE	Uh, I did. There was probably a few moments where I didn't think I was going to. Look, the drop in pay is obviously a big one for your apprenticeship, but at the same time, you are paid to be learning, I guess, is a difference to university and a lot of other study methods. I did receive a wage and supported my family while still obtaining my trade.
SCOTT	Yeah.
JAKE	And now I have that trade to fall back on, so that's a big difference to where I felt before. I've got the security. Even with the market changing and during the times we're in now, I've still got that trade paper and I've got the experience to go with it.
SCOTT	And how did you find your VET course and your apprenticeship itself? Like, did you have a great experience?

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JAKE	Yeah, I had a fantastic experience. So, I did my apprenticeship through group training which is a slight variation where your host employer lends you out.
SCOTT	Mm-hm.
JAKE	I had a great experience of that as well. They were fully supportive of the fact I had a young family. And the trade school... We found a trade school... Moved our trade school to better suit our needs after we'd started. And the trade school we continued with there, Holmesglen, just sort of found a way to let me do more work. I wanted to study more in the afternoons, I wanted to catch up, I wanted to get ahead. Obviously, with the family, it was all about finishing at a certain time. So I wanted to do it in my own time if I could.
SCOTT	Yeah, and how old and big is your family now?
JAKE	So we are... We've got two children now. So we've got a 5-year-old and a 2-year-old.
SCOTT	Yep.
JAKE	So the 2-year-old came just before exams, so I thought I'd just challenge myself and do that before my trade exam.
SCOTT	At least you had a bit of an excuse there, in the middle of the night, you say, "Darl, I've got to study. I can't get up."
JAKE	Yeah. That worked for a little bit.
SCOTT	(LAUGHS) Yeah! That's right. Those sort of things don't work for too long.
JAKE	I was very lucky my partner supported me the whole way through it. She's studying now, so it's her turn.
SCOTT	Oh, yeah, good. Great.
JAKE	And we're expecting our third and final child...
SCOTT	Oh, wow.
JAKE	..in the new year. So that's...look, that's right through my apprenticeship. I guess I've done one at the start, one in the middle and now I'm having one with apprentices working for me, so...with me, so...
SCOTT	Yeah. That's great, mate.
JAKE	Full turn.
SCOTT	You've got an apprentice yourself now?
JAKE	Yeah. So the company I'm working at, I'm Leading Hand there. We've got one apprentice that we've taken on full-time. We had a school-based apprentice as well, so...
SCOTT	Yeah.
JAKE	It's the way it goes, isn't it? You've got to give back.
SCOTT	Indeed.
JAKE	And start their journey the same way that mine was starting.
SCOTT	Exactly, mate. Now, I hear you've won a few awards. Tell us about those, buddy.
JAKE	Oh, I was lucky enough to be nominated for the Victorian Apprentice of the Year at the Training Awards, Victorian Training Awards.
SCOTT	Yep.
JAKE	Lucky enough, again, the judges... I won that award. It was a great honour to be there. Invited my trade school teachers to have some of them that had been on the journey with me.
SCOTT	Yeah.
JAKE	To be able to single them out onstage and thank them for their efforts.
SCOTT	Yeah.
JAKE	And just have, you know, future employer, past employer and my partner just to, I guess, wrap it all up and acknowledge it was a good...great four years and hopefully leads into a lot more.
SCOTT	Now, I mean, what did that mean to your family? They must have been so proud of you up on there on the national stage. I mean, that would have been fantastic for you, wouldn't it?
JAKE	It was. I think it was... not that you need it, but it was just some validation of the effort...just,

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	yeah, and just those extra...the extra hours put in or extra few minutes studying or trying to stay back and do the right thing by your boss and...
SCOTT	Yeah, that's good.
JAKE	Just sort of gave you just that little, you know, the little...the extra gratitude to what you'd done and gives you to build on for the next part of my career and hopefully our apprentice is at the same awards in 3.5 years time.
SCOTT	You're listening to the National Careers Institute podcast. Our guest today is Jake Carter, finalist for the 2019 Apprentice of the Year. Now, mate, once you finished your apprenticeship, what...what did you do? Where did you go from there once the four years was up?
JAKE	Oh, look, with the electrical apprenticeships, there's actually a lag of... between when you get signed off and when you can be a licensed electrician. There's about a 30-day lag between different departments and people who issue the licences. So, I went on, studied as many courses as I could just to sort of further myself in different areas, in explosive atmospheres and hazardous areas. And I went ahead and started my own business as well. So, I just went through the paperwork. And the paperwork doesn't stop, as a heads-up. I thought that was it at the start, but it keeps going.
SCOTT	Yep.
JAKE	And just got everything ready so I had my business to fall back on.
SCOTT	Yeah, yeah.
JAKE	And, yep, and then obviously the way it's fallen into now, now I'm working as a Leading Hand with a guy who just recently started his business, a commercial business, small commercial business, so...
SCOTT	Yep. So, what sort of projects are you working on now? Like, are we talking, you know, big high-rise style things or shopping centres or...?
JAKE	We've got... We probably call it small to medium commercial, the stuff we've got. We've got new builds for schools, 4-level hotels. We've got a 6-level storey building starting in the city... Well, due to start in the city, depending on restrictions. So probably that medium-sized construction, commercial construction and renovation.
SCOTT	So, when you started out, you were sitting in one of those buildings on the second or third floor at a desk in finance and now you're building the buildings that you were sitting in.
JAKE	Yeah. Well, I guess that's what the trade gives you. You know, every day's different, every project's different. There's a role if people are just wanting to turn up, you know, and have that job and reward of finishing a project. And there's more roles ahead, you know, if you want to take a Leading Hand role on or I'm obviously aiming to be a project manager and keep working on that.
SCOTT	Yeah.
JAKE	So, there's always somewhere to move, as you're well aware, in the construction industry and it's ever-changing - not one job will ever be the same.
SCOTT	No, that's right. And as a mature age student with plenty going on in your life at the time, and I already know the answer to this, would you do it all again and recommend an apprenticeship to others?
JAKE	I would do it again. I'd probably just save my partner the multiple hours of discussions that we went through when I was trying to change my mind.
SCOTT	Yeah. (LAUGHS)
JAKE	I put her through it trying to work out if it was the right thing to do with the baby on the way, but, look, it's given me stability, I've got that trade backup. Even with the times we're going through now in COVID, you know, I've got all the trainings, there's more training to do and it just gives you that reassurance that you do have something behind you.
SCOTT	Yep.

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JAKE	The apprenticeship acknowledged not so much just what trade you do. Even just completing an apprenticeship, it shows four years of schooling, but it also shows four years of life experience has been tracked, so...
SCOTT	Yeah, that's fantastic, mate. Look, it's been great to talk with you today and all the best for the future. There's no doubt in my mind you'll be project manager before long. And if you're interested in finding out how Vocational Education and Training can help you get the career you want, visit the National Careers Institute website at yourcareer.gov.au . Hey, Jake, thanks so much for talking to us, mate. All the best.
JAKE	Thank you very much.
SCOTT	I'm Scott Cam. Thanks for listening.
WOMAN	Thanks for listening to the National Careers Institute podcast. To explore how to start, change or boost your career, visit the National Careers Institute website at yourcareer.gov.au to view the online resources to help you make informed decisions about learning, training and work pathways.