

NCI Podcast – Arcadia Meldrum

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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 Arcadia Meldrum. And Arcadia is the winner of the Australian School-based Apprenticeship of the Year Award which she won last year while studying her HSC at Newman Technical Senior College in Port Macquarie. What a great spot Port Macquarie is. Welcome, Arcadia. How are you? |
| ARCADIA | Good, thanks. How are you? Thanks for having me. |
| SCOTT | Oh, thanks for coming on. Now, tell us about your undertaking your VET course while in Year 11 and 12. I love a school-based apprenticeship. I think it's a fantastic concept and idea. You've done that, so tell us a little bit about how it was, doing both. |
| ARCADIA | <p>Yep, so I started my VET journey in Year 11. So 2018, which is crazy to say - it doesn't feel like it happened two years ago. So I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to choose a VET pathway for my remaining years of study. So I was originally at a Catholic school - just a normal, HSC-driven school - and then had the opportunity to go, "Oh, I want to try something else. I want to look at the options that I have that could help me in my future."</p> <p>So lucky enough, ended up at Newman for 11 and 12. So, yeah, like what you said, it's a HSC not-based school. You complete certificates at the school and then you obviously still do your HSC but just don't get an ATAR at the end of the year.</p> <p>So I was lucky enough to study a Certificate III in Tourism and a Certificate III in Business, which was an awesome experience. Those two courses allowed me to then pursue a traineeship at Rydges Port Macquarie. So I was lucky enough to have a school-based apprenticeship there. And first of all did work placement for a term with them and had to have an understanding of events, 'cause that's what I had an idea of what I wanted to do. So did that for a term and then I was lucky enough to have the option to stay on as a school-based traineeship, which was amazing and, like, an awesome experience and really gave me the option to figure out what I wanted to do post-school.</p> |
| SCOTT | So a Certificate III in Tourism and then Rydges Port Macquarie, as you said. So, how many days do you go to school with this? Just tell everybody about that. I know, but I want everyone to know how you do it. So four days at school - is that right? |
| ARCADIA | Yep, so four days at school, one day work placement, which is great - so you get a little bit of a break-up. So I was lucky enough to go out to work placement on a Thursday. So you do that every term and then per term you have a block week, where you go to work for a whole week, which is really, really good - it gives the kids and yourself an opportunity to be, like, "Wow, this is what the real world's like." |
| SCOTT | Yeah. |
| ARCADIA | That full-week experience is really, really lucky. So, yeah, go to school four days and then was lucky enough to get paid for one of those days to go out and work. |
| SCOTT | Fantastic. |

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| | <p>You're listening to the National Careers Institute podcast. Our guest today is Arcadia Meldrum, the 2019 School-Based Apprentice of the Year.</p> <p>Now, Arcadia, what are you doing right now?</p> |
| ARCADIA | <p>Yeah, so I was actually lucky enough to get a position back at the school I studied at. So I studied at Newman Senior Technical College. So I'm actually doing a sports traineeship at the moment. So I'm a teacher's assistant in sport. So basically, I help run all the sports, whether that's in-school or out-school. Due to COVID, we're a little bit unlucky that we have no representative sport outside of school, but we still have the option to play in-school sport.</p> |
| SCOTT | <p>Yeah. Now, I hear that you're a pretty handy hockey player and that sport is a big part of your life.</p> |
| ARCADIA | <p>Yeah.</p> |
| SCOTT | <p>Where do you play hockey in Port Macquarie? For who?</p> |
| ARCADIA | <p>Yeah, so I play for Thunder in Port Macquarie. So I play for an A-grade team on a Saturday, which I always have - I've played since I could walk. Both my mum and my dad play, so it was kind of bred into us, as they all say, and I don't think I had another option to play other sport. (LAUGHS) But I'm definitely lucky that I got into playing hockey. It's an awesome, awesome sport and gives you the opportunity to meet so many people. And I get to also play multisports outside of school - so just like a fun comp where you get to play any sport. Sport's always been a passion of mine and a great love. So, yeah, I get the option to play that in Port Macquarie, which I'm pretty lucky to be able to.</p> |
| SCOTT | <p>And you're doing that at the school that you're, you know, training at as well. You've got a lot to do with sports and different sports there.</p> <p>So, what would your actual dream career be?</p> |
| ARCADIA | <p>Yeah, so I've had a few dream career interests, but my main goal definitely is to work for the Olympics in their events and have the option to run basically the Olympics and all the sports that go with the Olympics. And that's probably my dream goal and my dream pursuit, being able to put my love of events and love of sport all into one. So that's the ideal goal, but who knows what will happen?</p> |
| SCOTT | <p>You sound so enthusiastic, which I really love, you know? You've only just really left school last year. Is that correct - you left school last year?</p> |
| ARCADIA | <p>Yeah, yeah, and I'm a year younger as well. So I'd originally be in Year 12 this year, but Mum and Dad put me into school a bit earlier, so I'm only fresh 18 this year. So, yeah, fresh out of school.</p> |
| SCOTT | <p>Unreal. Now, winning the Apprentice of the Year - the School-based Apprentice of the Year - do you think that's going to help you realise your dream?</p> |
| ARCADIA | <p>Oh, definitely. I think the whole pathway of VET made me realise what I wanted to do when I left school. And I don't think I would have had that option if I didn't go that pathway. And not saying that uni's not an option at the end of the year, but being able to follow that VET and that Vocational Education and Training and getting those skills that I've learned from each subject and being able to put them in the real world, I definitely think without even the award and being able to speak to other people about my passion and my love, I don't think I would have realised what I wanted to do or what opportunities were out there for me. And I definitely think I got that through the award, which is the biggest, just...being able to meet people and getting the opportunities through that. So, yeah, definitely I think my award's helped me realise what I want to do when I finish school - or when I have finished school, really.</p> |
| SCOTT | <p>Now, Arcadia, there's a lot of parents, I think, that maybe steer their kids into uni that probably don't belong in uni. And this is what this is all about - it's just telling kids and parents out there that a VET training course could be a really great way to go. So, how did your parents feel when</p> |

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| | you were getting involved in the school-based apprenticeship? Were they supportive of that and they could see that it was a passion for you? |
| ARCADIA | Yeah, so it's actually funny. When I was making the change in Year 10 and speaking to my parents about following a VET pathway, they were not for it. They didn't want me to follow that way. They thought it would be a waste of my time. You know, those stereotypical "It's for drop-out kids". |
| SCOTT | Mmm. |
| ARCADIA | They just weren't interested in me going that pathway. |
| SCOTT | And, of course, you and I... you and I are those drop-out kids. And look and listen to you - you're so enthusiastic you're going to go all the way to the Olympics, there's no doubt about that. So your parents weren't that keen to start with. How did you make them come round? |
| ARCADIA | Yeah, so it's actually funny. We went out to... A lot of schools have an open day or an open night, and I took my parents out there and they kinda saw what the school had to offer and how it would suit me as a hands-on learner instead of a more academic learner. And they kinda had an understanding of, "Wow, this will suit her so much more than staying at a normal, traditional school and that will help her future and her future career than a different pathway." But it was definitely challenging to kinda convince them to go out there, but Mum and Dad have been massive supporters of VET now and if you ever speak to my dad, he won't stop talking about how much he loves VET and how it's helped me as a student for my future. So, yeah, I think for any parents out there, they just need to go and have a look and really see what their kid needs and what their kid will benefit from, really. |
| SCOTT | I mean, how incredible are you? You're in Year 10, you're taking your parents to an open day to convince them about your career and your love and passion. That's so mature and that's just so fantastic. Have you got any advice, you know, for other young people that are taking on a VET pathway? Follow the dream? Is that what you're going to say, I'm sure? |
| ARCADIA | Yeah, and I think, um, kids need to understand the only person that knows you is you and the only person that needs to make decisions for yourself is you as well. I think that's a big one. You're only going to know what's going to benefit you for your future, and if it's the VET pathway, then follow that pathway 110%. I know, for an example, of me, I think it's helped me incredibly with being able to speak to people and being able to actually get work. I know a lot of kids that didn't follow that pathway that aren't have... don't have full-time work or don't know what they want to do, and I was just that lucky that I went, "No, this is what I want to do and this is what I'm going to pursue." So, yeah, the only person that knows you is you and you need to make the decision on your own. So I definitely think that's the biggest advice that I'd give. |
| SCOTT | That's fantastic. I've no doubt that your future is going to be breathtaking. You just sound so passionate. Thank you so much for your time today and sharing your story with us and good luck for the future, Arcadia. You're a champion. I loved talking to you. You're fantastic. Now, 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 - yourcareer.gov.au . 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 |

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