

Senator Michaela Cash- Introduction

Hi, I'm Senator Michaela Cash, Minister for Employment Skills, Small and Family business. Welcome to National Skills Week 2020. And to this year's podcast series- Journeys to Success -brought to you by SkillsOne. In this podcast series, you'll hear from a number of VET Alumni and Australian training award winners. They will share with you interesting and varied journeys they've taken due to their vocational education and training. Our VET alumni and Australian training award winners come from all walks of life. They have inspirational stories to share about what prompted their learning decisions, their influences, their training and work journey, and why vocational education and training was the right choice for them. This podcast is a great way to learn about the success people have had in their careers and life. There was so much diversity and opportunity that a VET pathway can offer. So enjoy the podcast, be inspired and the best of luck to those who are starting on their VET journey. And if you want more information on where a vocational education and training pathway can take you visit the national careers Institute website @nci.dese.gov.au.

Anne - Host:

This episode explores the experience of Anthony Di Cristofaro, who entered into the apprenticeship space as a mature age apprentice at the age of 31. Anthony speaks of his decision and his journey through the training, but it doesn't finish there. Anthony has got an amazing story to tell about the impact and change that being as an apprentice has had on him. The work and experiences that have followed him are inspiring.

Anne - Host:

We also hear from Darren Cocks, the Chief Operating Officer of Human Capital Solutions at Business Australia, and a Director of the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network. He is actually an Apprentice Industry Expert. Darren speaks to us about what's actually happening in the apprenticeship space. So what are some of the emerging skills areas that need to be incorporated into the apprenticeship programs? We finish up with some insights and advice to parents.

Anne - Host:

Welcome Anthony and Darren. How are you guys?

Darren:

Very good, thanks.

Anthony:

Very well. Good thanks. Thanks for having me.

Anne - Host:

Thanks Anthony. Thanks Darren. So what we might just do is that we'd really like to start the discussion Anthony, with yourself. We just wanted to talk to you about your journey and how did you get into the apprenticeship? Did you want to just start us, give us a little bit of a background about yourself?

Anthony:

Yeah, sure. So I started my apprenticeship at 31 years old. Straight out of school, I went to university, I didn't know what I wanted to do at the time, so I did a Bachelor of Arts and I majored in psychology. That was at the University of Western Australia, and pretty quickly, it just became more apparent it wasn't for me. There was no clear end result. I liked psychology, but I knew that at the end of my degree, I wasn't going to be able to be a psychologist and I didn't want to accumulate any more HECS debt. So I left uni and I went to work in the mining and oil and gas industry. There was a boom in Western Australia at the time, and I did very well for 10 years. However, once the boom ended and jobs dried up, it became more and more apparent to me when it was all said and done, I was an unskilled worker with no official qualification to fall back on.

Anthony:

So job prospects and financial security became a real concern for me. You had managers going for normal positions and what chance did we have if everyone was losing their job? And I saw it was going to happen to me. So at 31 years old and having a young family, a wife, two kids at the time, three now, just things like wanting to buy my own house and longing for financial security, I started a mature age apprenticeship. I chose carpentry and joinery as something I actually was interested in out of school, but it wasn't an option for me then for various reasons.

Anthony:

So I'd come back to that initial interest and passion I may have had for it but also, the fact that I've always enjoyed working with my hands and the skills I would acquire would not only be essential for a successful career, but very useful for my personal life too. And I've always experienced great personal satisfaction from working hard and building something to create a finished product. So I thought, why not take that drive and passion and turn it into a career?

Anne - Host:

Great. So, I mean Anthony, there's just so much in that, in regards to the fact that you started one career, then you moved through another career, that you were 31 when you started to do an apprenticeship, and I'm going to ask Darren about that soon because that's a really interesting point. But before I go to Darren, Anthony, how hard was that decision at 31 years of age, to start in an apprenticeship? Can you talk to me about how you went through that whole process? It must've been incredibly difficult to make those decisions.

Anthony:

Yeah, it was, it was terrifying. It was leaving a situation I'd known for 10 years, which was walking into something which was completely unknown to me. So I didn't actually get much advice about it either. A lot of people were shocked, oh, you're doing this with kids and family and you're going to be an apprentice? You know what I mean? So, I didn't get much advice there. My wife was very supportive, she'd actually done a mature age, not mature age, but a late hairdressing apprenticeship. So when we first got together, she was just go and do it. She got the support behind me. And so it was very much a case of me just jumping into it and just backing myself and backing my drive and determination to get it done. Finding someone to give me a chance, which wasn't too hard. I site knocked and made a million calls and group trainers and supervisors on building sites and eventually, the combination fell into place. Someone said, "Let's do it," and I was straight in. I resigned and two weeks later I started my apprenticeship.

Anne - Host:

So Anthony, I'll step away from you for a moment. Darren, is Anthony's journey typical of apprenticeships, of how an apprenticeship starts? Can you talk to me, is that stereotypic?

Darren:

Probably more stereotypical than people might understand. That often, people leave school without knowing exactly what it is that they want to do, and there's an old adage, just do something. Don't sit on the lounge, get out there and do something and you'll start to find your way. These days, there's better psychometrics tools and things that can help guide you in terms of what interest have you got and what aptitude have you got, ability to do something. You might have an interest in caring for people, but whether you're going to be a brain surgeon at the high end or somewhere else in the middle with the caring or other, depends on what your ability is.

Darren:

But I think what's interesting about what Anthony said there, is that, it reminds me of another adage about make looking for a job, a full time job and you'll get one. So he tried everything. He tried VET training, he tried looking at a number of different areas and actually focused on it, and was successful. Quite often, people I think, can fall into the trap of saying, well, for example, it's a COVID world right now and therefore, I don't need to because it's okay not to. When, in fact, there are jobs to be had and if you get out there and make the most of it, you'll land something.

Anne - Host:

Have you got any stats or is there anything you can tell us about a typical age of an apprentice or when they start to enter the trade or is there much out there in that space at all?

Darren:

There is. The typical age would typically be between 15 and 18 where they commence. More often, it's moved from a younger age through to HSC leavers because more people are coming out of school with some sort of vocational training, and then moving into it.

Darren:

But quite often, nowadays, it's common for people to enter into a mature age apprenticeship. Ironically, they call mature age 21 and older, you're going into an old apprenticeship. Whereas, other things, they'll measure it at 40 or 50 or 60, hopefully it's later. We've got apprentices going into a changing career into their sixties. The oldest one I saw, many years ago when I was on the road signing up apprentices, was someone at 63 decided they'd take a change in career and go into forestry because they loved it. And the need for cash wasn't the same, but they just loved doing this and wanted to learn more about it.

Anne - Host:

That's amazing. So thanks Darren, I'll come back to you because I really want to talk a little bit about the psychometric testings and some of the information and the tools that are going to be available to help you make that decision regarding apprenticeships. But Anthony, just coming back to yourself in regards to that decision and going into it, talk to me about how, like your first day on the job as an apprentice. How did that go for you? Was it what you expected, can you talk to me through it?

Anthony:

I can take two angles from here. It was pretty much what I expected in the sense that, I knew how to work, I'd worked for 10 years, so I already had that down, knowing how to be successful in a job. But it was a bit odd being my age and being the new apprentice. But at the same time, I didn't have too much time to get caught up in all of that because everything was on the line, so I just threw myself into everything. I'd sweep the floor, sweep it like you're going to leave your name on it. You know what I mean? It doesn't matter what it is. It was just, I just soaked up everything I could. So it wasn't too weird. I just thought, well, I've done this. I just have to just let it consume me and give everything I have.

Anne - Host:

And was that a lot to do with the fact is that, it is a process, isn't it, to go through, to do a traineeship? You have to do an apprenticeship or a traineeship.

Anthony:

Another side I guess to it, is that there is a process and at the start, you know nothing. You don't know a thing and there's a lot to go through. It's four years and you need every one of them, more so as you go along. What you do in your first year, I think it's all very appropriate how it's structured. You spend your first year learning how to work and then your skills come up, your real solid skills come in your last two. So it's definitely a process.

Anne - Host:

I wanted to actually ask that. You also mentioned regarding, you went back to carpentry because it was your passion or what you had wanted to do before but in the end, you decided not to. You've now come back into this passion and you've actually won the Western Australian Apprentice of the Year Award for the training awards and you're a finalist in the Australian Training Awards. So you can obviously see that you've come into what you really want to do. Can you talk to me about why didn't you do carpentry, if that was your interest from 18? What happened in that school space that you ended up going to university? Why didn't you just go straight into the apprenticeship? Can you talk to me about that?

Anthony:

Sure, that's easy. It was just career advice, parents point of view, just how it shaped and that was that, university was the go. There was no other avenue, and that's the stigma of TAFE and the stigma of apprenticeships, particularly then, probably still now. University is such a universal word and recognized everywhere. My dad was an engineer, and teachers, they all come from university, it's in their mindset. It's what they know, it's what they push. And they mean well, but that was my experience. You need to go to university, TAFE, apprenticeships, that's like your fourth or fifth choice. You know what I mean? It's not your first, whether it's obviously, the reason we're here is we should be pushing this as a first preference, and be showing it. It is a way you can forge an incredible career.

Anne - Host:

So the interesting thing is, Darren, and you're talking about that concept of about a stigma at that stage. And we're only talking a few years ago, and parents' perceptions and there is a report regarding perceptions versus reality, that 79% of parents will want their children to go to university, if for no other reason, because they think that is going to be successful.

Anne - Host:

When in fact, the reality is, is the outcomes for graduates from vocational training is sitting around about the 86 to 88% at the moment in regards to success. The salaries that they were getting from my readings in the 2019 student outcomes guide for universities, about 72% of graduates are only now working. And most of those graduates are in jobs, which are really at the high end specialist area. Those who are just doing generic ones, there's something like about a 50 to 54% success rate in regards to getting a job.

Anne - Host:

So, Anthony, I do understand that you have gone through some changes in your family in regards to that, but when you did make that decision to go back and do an apprenticeship, were you able to discuss that back with your family at all?

Anthony:

I just told them what was happening. I remember telling my, I told my dad I'd already done it, I already started. I go, "Guess what, dad? I quit my job. I'm doing an apprenticeship." So he took a bit to come round, but at this stage he knew, I knew what I was doing. That I was in control and like I said, my wife was extremely supportive and the kids thought it was cool.

Anthony:

So from that point of view and friends and people around me, I know they were quite inspired by the decision and to see the success. And I know several people have followed me in after seeing what I achieved, they've just started. I know a couple of first years who have done the same thing, and even younger people. Kids of parents that I know that have witnessed what I did and now they're doing apprenticeships.

Anne - Host:

Thanks, Anthony. So over to yourself, again, Darren. That conversation that Anthony was talking about, the parents wanting their kids to go to university and that wasn't really an option. Are you still finding that that is the case in the role that you do and all your team? How much of your time is spent, I wouldn't say fighting, but working in that area to convince people that apprenticeships are an extraordinarily area of success?

Darren:

Educating rather than fighting.

Anne - Host:

Nice words.

Darren:

I've got a favorite saying that most parents want their children to be happy. And there's a great saying that says, if you do a job you love, you'll never work a day in your life. And so if they truly want you to be happy, find something that you really enjoy doing and be good at it. Whether that's university or

whether that's vocational training or apprenticeship, find something that suits you and that's where you enjoy that time spent.

Darren:

And there is quite a lot of data about the influences. And it's also about the way in which the education system is geared as well with regards to the school ranking at the end, in terms of why you aim towards university? And if it's not for you, then you go on a career path otherwise, and not often the vocational guidance is very solid when it comes to the other pathways.

Darren:

Primarily for the reasons that Anthony mentioned, that school teachers and careers advisors more often, have come from a school institution to uni institution back to institution to work, and not as many have that real world experience in other industries. They've got real world experience in the vocational area that they've worked, but not in other employment opportunities. And so you tend to guide in the area that you know and were strongest and that happens as well. So I think it's partly the way that it's structured and that provides great opportunities for many, but it's not the right opportunity for everyone. And as I said, do a job that you love and you'll never work a day in your life.

Anne - Host:

I know that the careers advisors and all the associations with them, they are trying to do the best jobs that they can. I know that there's a lot of work now going into that space because of this recognition that people going in and doing jobs or going into study, if they're not happy, they're not going to continue in it. There was some data that came out in regards to, with the drop in university levels, allowing a lot more people to enter into that field. That people with an ATAR of less than 50%, more than 25% of them are unsuccessful and drop out within the first year, and between 50 and 55 it goes up even higher. So the idea is that whilst they're getting into university, really, they'll probably end up coming back to their pathways anyway.

Anne - Host:

So how many of the people, Darren, that you deal with have gone through what Anthony has done, going through the university pathways or have gone out and worked, and then come into the apprenticeship? Would you say that that forms a large component? What sort of stage, sorry, What sort of numbers would there be?

Darren:

It's not a large component. It's a relatively small component that come out of university and then opt for an apprenticeship later. Up to similar, probably, to the number of the mature age apprenticeships. But what we do find, and we did a survey of about 35,000 youth 18 months to two years ago, and 49% of those said that they didn't get very good careers advice. And what we've found is that there's similar occupations that can be advised on, how does a careers advisor get across that option and how do they guide people in the right direction?

Anne - Host:

I suppose that's where organisations such as yourself come in as well, to try to mediate and to try to be a point of view. Can you just talk to me a little bit, Darren, in regards to what your organisation can do and how it can actually help in that space?

Darren:

Sure. So our parent organisation is a business chamber, so it's connected to industry and the demands of industry and what employers are asking of us. And in that particular space, our most recent survey talked about the key skills that employers are looking for when they're hiring and what they will be over the next five years. And those particular skills were, in general skills, communication came out the highest, teamwork, problem solving, self management.

Darren:

In the technical and professional skills, it was about industry knowledge, marketing, the trade qualifications, they were held highest in terms of those technical areas. And so our apprenticeship center that we run on behalf of the federal government, helps place apprentices where they find out what career they want and before that, we've got a website called skillsroad.com.au.

Darren:

And Skillsroad is about helping guide students who don't quite know what they want to do, because if you have to choose subject selection in year 10 for 11 and 12 when you don't know what you want to do beyond that, then what subjects do you choose to get you on the right path to what you want to do, if you don't yet know what you want to do? You either keep them broad or you know that you want to be a doctor and so, you choose science, or you want to be in trade, so you choose woodwork and whatever else you can do, construction.

Darren:

What we do with the career quiz, is really unpack what they're really interested in, and then it serves up a range of options. If you like working outdoors, then here's a range of different jobs. That might be a surveyor because you're still working outdoors and you've got to go to university, or it could be a carpenter or a landscaper. But it gives you some idea of guidance that can help with subject selection. And then what we find similar to university, is you get high drop out rates in the first six months of apprenticeships. After six months, it tapers off quite a bit.

Darren:

So if you can guide people correctly at the beginning, not just their, try before they buy kind of thing, but they've actually had a bit of an understanding that they want to go into that trade. Like Anthony, he knew what he wanted to do, so his chances of success, as a mature age worker, is probably much greater because of some of the resilience he comes with, some of the life skills he comes with, as opposed to a younger worker or school leaver, who needs that little bit of coaching along the way and to guide them into the right occupation to start with. And that's where we can help with some of these psychometrics tools. And then you subsequently resume building and most people don't know that they're going to get their tax file number and superannuation, and we've got a whole lot of life hacks on the website as well about how you do that.

Anne - Host:

You're probably across what's going to be happening in the apprenticeship field in the next five years. And I suppose I'm asking for, at this stage, what are some of the insights that you can give us in regards to what's actually happening in the apprenticeship space? So Anthony did his, he did it over four years, he did it on the job, he went to TAFE as well, et cetera, et cetera. In the future in the emerging trends, what's happening in the apprenticeship space? And the reason why I'm asking this is so, it's not just for the people who are thinking of going into apprenticeships but also, the parents and all the careers advisors who will be listening is, what is coming up? What's coming up in that space in the apprenticeship space?

Darren:

It's really about the jobs of the future. And I talked about some of the softer skills, the communication and things that people need, problem solving, adaptability and an ability to communicate with people. All of those skills are pretty broad, but we will have a lot more jobs in our lifetime now than ever in the past. This one job for life has been a long time ago in terms of that. And so this lifelong learning concept, learning while you earn in an apprenticeship. Learning and you can now get loans similar to HECS and pay those off later on and help support get your tools in your trade, a vehicle and those types of things.

Darren:

So there will be a continued demand for the trade skills, particularly the highest number. In fact, the most registrations in New South Wales and Australia is electricians and then carpenters, and then coming through most of the building trades, a few of the hospitality ones. Clearly in a COVID environment, hospitality is a bit challenged at the moment. The numbers and the apprentices being stood down or handed back during the early stages of COVID, was about 30%. And then the government put in place with some advocacy, we did this wage subsidies and that's helped support those. And they will come back when the economy starts to lift back up again.

Darren:

They will be in high demand again, because they'll be trying to backfill. People with families might be looking for alternative careers. We've seen people from the likes of airlines, who have left with good customer service skills saying, "How else can I apply those service skills to something else that's a little bit more robust in that kind of environment?" So I think it's more about that broad range of adaptability, because the jobs coming will be higher in technical skill, computer programming, ability to use software. I think those are probably adapted best to the COVID change with those that were good on technology and those that struggled. Those like me that haven't used it as much as my children do. My daughter can make an iPad dance. I spoke a little bit with that, but so those skills will hold them in good stead in the future.

Anne - Host:

What are employers asking for? With all this new technology, they talk about AI, VR, they talk about all this need for all this. Will this now become entrenched and part of a, your apprenticeship program? Are there new subjects or modules or competencies that are going to be required in that area, in the future, do you think?

Darren:

I think it definitely, it will be and TAFEs and training colleges will need to adapt. I was at an international conference overseas last year about the future of work and where it's going and the automation aspect and the artificial intelligence aspect. I'll give you a trade example of that, landscaping. Think about the permutations of home robots, the I-robot in your house that now vacuums the floor instead of you having to do that. And the equivalent of that, which is a creepy crawly in your pool, they've now got those and have had them for a number of years in your garden. So a landscaper doesn't necessarily need to mow the lawn, they can set the pruner, they go do the edging while they let out another activity.

Darren:

What does that do for your pricing and your margin, and when someone else can lower the price, that will change the need for the trades to adapt to new tools. Whether that's a hedger or whether that's an automatic robot lawn mower, that will depend on the nature of the size of the land that you've got to cover. I have seen the supersize drone that's the size of one of the big park lawn mowers that the council go around on, but you certainly see the backyard ones and they're starting to take off now.

Darren:

And then, in the space that Anthony is in, in carpentry, if you've got to do a roof fix with a roofer or something like that, on taller buildings now we're starting to see drones go up to do the initial inspection. Yes, you need your gutters cleaned, I've been up and checked it, and just flown something up there, I didn't have to get on a ladder. It was safer. And so you got a little screen here and then you start to think differently about how you can go out and quote jobs and win work, based on the flexibility of what technology can enable us to do.

Anne - Host:

It's just amazing how leaps and bounds of what's actually happening in the concept of work and the skills that are needed, that we're going through. Anthony, I wanted to ask you about some of your memorable moments in your apprenticeship. The things that really have been, things that you actually really look back and say, "Yepp, this is what I'm really proud of or this is it." Do you want to talk to us a little bit about that? What's happening in that space for you or what was happening in that space?

Anthony:

Memorable moments for me in my apprenticeship, well, actually quite early on, because I thrived in my apprenticeship. I did quite good from start to end. When I realised that I was really good at what I was doing, it was like reaffirming, and it was like, I'm on the right track here. And that was a memorable moment because that happened quite early. I did my first year and I went, I'm good. I like where I am, I like where I'm going to be. I've got a clear idea of where I'm going to be. So that was, I remember feeling really good about that.

Anthony:

During my apprenticeship, being given a chance to lead and mentor the younger guys especially, that was very, that's something I'll never forget. I hold it dear because a lot of these younger guys, they need support and they need quality leaders above them that not only know their craft but also, sort of, I don't know, interpersonal skills, communicative skills, ethical skills. These things are important for these younger guys to make it in an industry that can be pretty brutal.

Anthony:

So being able to mentor a lot of people and help a lot of people through my apprenticeship was very important to me. I did a lot of work with an organisation called MATES in Construction and Mental Health. That's another big one. And I guess, just also winning the awards, you won't find a bigger one than winning. Especially I mean, WA training award when I won that, that for me, was probably one of the best moments of my life because everyone thinks that it's not common knowledge. I don't publicise it, but my apprenticeship part did really well, but I went through the trenches. A lot happened and I was a bit mismanaged at the start and had a whole heap to catch up on at the end and got it over the line.

Anthony:

And also, I lost my mum during my apprenticeship, which was my last year, which was very difficult. I had my own family to look after as well. So what I'm trying to get, I'm not saying this for sympathy, I'm just trying to highlight the resilience that it gave me. And with this goal at the end and all the hard work I put into it, and then to get recognised for my efforts, right behind my birth of my kids and my wedding, that is up there. It is one of the best moments of my life.

Anne - Host:

I'm glad you said the wedding.

Anthony:

I put the kids first, slot in the wedding, being in the WA apprenticeship award. Nah I did, I put everything I had into it, so to get the recognition was amazing.

Anne - Host:

Yeah, so what does success mean to you, Anthony? If we talk about vocational education can lead you to your success or success your way, what is success to you? How do you, how would you summarise that or how would you explain that?

Anthony:

So success for me, is probably feeling proud of who you are and what you've achieved, which is what we just talked about. Coming to the end of it and being incredibly proud of what I did there. It wasn't easy. It was a leap into the unknown and it came off exactly how I planned it. So that's success, that feels like success, for sure.

Anthony:

Being able to, in the aftermath of it all, I guess, from my apprenticeship, being able to choose where I want to work. Towards the end of my apprenticeship, I wanted a break from construction. I did construction my entire apprenticeship. I wanted to explore other things and so I started applying for jobs before I finished. And fire protection was an area of interest to me, it's like a little niche area, carpentry it's...

Anthony:

And so I started applying for jobs and I walked off my apprenticeship, I got signed off. And then the next day I started with, I got accepted and I started with a fire protection company, a smaller company. It was

an amazing experience. So I went from completing my apprenticeship, the next day, started with a number one preference of where I wanted to work. And I got all the jobs I applied for, so that was, having options and being able to choose where I work, that is success.

Anthony:

And lastly, success is being offered jobs without applying for them. I mean, when does that happen? But that has happened to me. In the last six months, I've taken time to renovate my house and save myself \$20,000. That's also, all as a result of my apprenticeship. It's just various forms of success.

Anne - Host:

You talked about resilience and Darren, I wanted to talk to you about this. He talked about all these things that happened, the great things that happen during his apprenticeship but also, some of the real hardships that he also went through. And it's like any job, you know, nothing is perfect. Nothing just you said, it's not linear, it just keeps going. But he talks about the winning the awards, the family situations. I mean, working as an apprentice on an apprenticeship wage, supporting the families, going through that space as well. I mean, that's another huge part, be it, you don't necessarily start from the bottom, but there is that all that component in there. But there is that really great comment that I know that's actually on the Skillsroad website, in regards to resilience, and it resonates with me.

Anne - Host:

And it talks about the Generation Z and the young Millennials, they're shaping up to be one of the most resilient generations yet. And they're ready to get to grips with changing their future for the better, but they still need, and they expect our help to get there. So I love the idea that they are talking about, the generations that are coming through now, they're so well equipped. They are just confronting so many things and their resilience is just pushing through.

Anne - Host:

But it's like how both of you have said, they can't do it on their own. They've got to have that support, don't they? They've got to have the parents, they've got to have their families, they've got to have their employer. They have to have industry associations and apprenticeship support programs to go through. If you had to give some advice to maybe some parents at the moment, in regards to apprenticeships, what advice could you give to them at that? If they're saying, I'm not really quite sure. My daughter or my son is thinking about it, but you don't want them to go to uni, what would your advice be?

Darren:

It takes a village. I think getting a bit of a standing from others, because one of the things we recommend with the Skillsroad site is actually, we get the parents to do the quiz on the student, as if they're the student on their child. And then we get the child to do it, and then compare the results to see whether they both think the same about each other. And then discuss it or debate. It's quite an interesting one to do. But for the parents, you want your child to be happy. You know what they like, you've got a feel for what they might be good at and you can be a sounding board for them to guide them and coach them in terms of their direction.

Darren:

But there'll be plenty of options for them and Anthony talked about it in terms of resilience, determination, desire, what makes him get out of bed in the morning? That's the hardest part. You're going from nine to three typically, in a school or slightly earlier to slightly later, into a five days a week, sometimes six or seven, in a trade, working pretty long hours. It's about keeping at it. Part of the reason you're successful you know, post that, Anthony, I'm sure is the fact that you've completed the qualification of that length. And you've got a ticket that says that you know how to do certain things. That means something.

Darren:

So that is something that's portable, not only within Australia, but overseas, if you wanted to go and live somewhere else. You can take those skills, they will moan. Sure, there's some building codes and other things you'd need to learn in a different market, but it's a skill that people understand, and it means something.

Anne - Host:

And Anthony, advice for parents or somebody who's thinking of doing the apprenticeships, but is still being caught up in that, what do I do? What would, if you had to give some key advice or some things that you'd like to get across?

Anthony:

I'd probably say that they need to be speaking to people like me and other people that have been through it. I mean, Darren has spoken about they can go take the quiz and then you can also go and jump on somewhere like, say, My Skills, which is the government website. And that'll take you through these courses, state by state, discipline by discipline. And you can also find someone who has completed that course that lives in your part of the country, and they'll be happy to speak to you. And that's what has to happen. People like that speaking to parents, not just the students, but their parents and their advisors and the people that influence them and have their best interests at heart, because that all goes towards it, heavily.

Anthony:

And I'd say that, I'm not anyone special. I'm just your run of the mill guy, but what I managed to achieve through my apprenticeship was extremely special, I believe. And my point is that, this is for everyone. This is, anyone can do what I did through the VET and apprenticeship system. It's a person my age or older can reinvent themselves, enter the workforce or a young person who knows exactly what they want to do, is given a very specific and direct avenue, to take it and forge an amazing career. If I had started 20 years younger, I can't tell you where I'd be, but it's a very real and clear outcome you get with apprenticeships.

Darren:

I think support too. Anthony started a bit older, where he had a bit more life skill, but when you're leaving that school environment and going into a job for the first time, there's some new dynamics and politics and other things that they just need some support along the way to say, "It's okay, you're going to get through it. And this is how you deal with this." You can't just text the boss, you need to pick up the phone and we'll have an ad hoc conversation, and sometimes that's a bit confronting.

Anne - Host:

Absolutely. I really love that advice. I love whole idea about the concept of the village and the idea that you're not on your own. You know apprenticeships are no different, I think, than any other life journey, it's individualised. As much as people saying, you have to go do on this day, this day, each person's journey is different. They've all got different experiences. You work with different employers, you've got a whole different teams around you as well. It's great to hear that there's a lot of support out there, and there's a lot of places that you can go to get that. And I think they're great ideas in regards to what you've indicated.

Anne - Host:

Anthony and Darren, I'd like to just say, thank you so much for coming on and giving us your insights, your experience, and sharing with us.

Darren:

Thank you very much.

Anthony:

Thanks.

Anne - Host:

Thank you very much for joining us for this podcast. We hope that you enjoyed listening. If you want more information on vocational education and training, career pathways and your own way to succeed, check out the National Careers Institute website. You can find them at nci.dese.gov.au. This podcast was an initiative of the Australian Government. We look forward to you joining us for another episode in this podcast series.