

VICTORIA NEWSLETTER

ABBTF

AUSTRALIAN BRICK & BLOCKLAYING
TRAINING FOUNDATION LIMITED

December 2007

Productive Apprentices Repay Investment

A recent survey of bricklayers in Victoria confirmed that hiring a new apprentice can be a valuable investment.

Bricklayers said that putting an apprentice on the trowel during the first year would make sure the apprentice was productive and would return a profit of over \$28,000 for the bricklayer over three years.

In year one the bricklayer would be out of pocket for a small amount, however this would be repaid in the second year giving the bricklayer a profit of more than \$8,000. In the third and final year the bricklayer should make more than \$20,000

The figures include time for training on site and at TAFE and include the Government subsidy of \$4,000 and the new ABBTF subsidy of \$6,000 for apprentices hired from January 2007. Costings were based on residential bricklaying rates and costs.

Bricklayers also said an apprentice provided flexibility for their business, productivity, good company and could run the business in years to come.

There are many excellent young people who are capable and keen to start an apprenticeship. Some have completed Step Out Programs at secondary schools or pre-apprenticeship training with the support of the ABBTF. Costings on the affordability of hiring a new apprentice are available from ABBTF.

ABBTF Subsidies Create Growth

The introduction of subsidies for directly employed apprentices has been well accepted by the trade and created growth in enrolments.

The new ABBTF support is \$6,000 paid in \$2,000 instalments at the completion of each year. The benefit is available to bricklayers hiring new apprentices from January 2007. The word has spread and the new sign-ups has increased enrolments. Wait listed numbers in training started in 2008 are also higher than the previous year.

At the end of November 2007 – 149 bricklayers have registered for the subsidy with ABBTF. This is in addition to the 130 apprentices with host bricklayers through Group Training Companies who continue to benefit from lower charge-out rates due to ABBTF support.

The Brick Man Gets His Reward

The contribution of John Claxton, founder and managing director of The Brick Man, to help ease Australia's chronic skills shortage has been recognised by the Federal Government. John employs and trains bricklayers and works closely with Holmesglen TAFE.

The company was recently awarded the Minister's Award for Excellence for Employers of Australian apprentices for the Melbourne region.

John's wife and co-director, Kate, says bricklaying is a trade where the skills shortage is apparent, and taking on apprentices is the only way forward.

"Bricklayers are essential to us," she said. "We had plenty of work, but couldn't grow the business. Taking on apprentices was the only way we could grow the business to our standards."



John Claxton (left) and his team.

For John Claxton, there is great satisfaction in training apprentices. "We have five apprentices, three qualified last year and two are still going," says John.

"Angus McLaren, who finished his apprenticeship last year, started as an apprentice bricklayer at 19 years old after completing a year of an arts degree. He is now one of my leading hands."

John explains what appeals to The Brick Man when seeking an apprentice, "Presentation - not their look, but the way they present and conduct themselves. Interests, I like them to be into sport, music or some extra-curricular activity or interest."

Kate adds, "We look for a work/life balance, a well-rounded citizen, with some sort of social direction. I also like it when they make the effort to contact us themselves – not relying on parents to do it. That shows they want to be a bricklayer."

Bricklaying hasn't changed says John, "The method always stays the same. It is more about the type of work we target. We seize opportunities when they come along to give variety to our boys, and to keep skills up."

Safety and training are an integral part of the on-the-job training. Quarterly forums are held where issues are attended to and equipment safety checked. The Claxton's receive regular reports covering achievement levels, grades and attendance levels at Holmesglen TAFE.

John himself won several awards as an apprentice. "It was really motivating for me. I was the Master Builders' Best First Year Apprentice, and came second at the Victorian Work Skills Competition for bricklaying. I still remember being pleased and excited at the wins, and I want that for my apprentices too."

Meet Your ABBTF Development Manager – Jane Alexander

Victorian Development Manager, Jane Alexander, has been with the ABBTF since it commenced operation in June 2003. Before becoming part of the national ABBTF body the state organisation was known as the Victorian Brick & Blocklaying Training Foundation (VBBTF).

Jane has an extensive background in IT, development and management including human resources.

A great believer in physical fitness she has worked as a fitness instructor and personal trainer and ran her own fitness business.

"I have been fortunate to work with some fantastic teams of people and entrepreneurial managers focused on creating new ventures.

"When we started I enjoyed the challenge of creating systems and procedures to implement our plans to tackle the skills shortage. My IT background has helped in setting up the scheme and in recent years establish operations across other states.

"My major focus from the beginning was to develop relationships with our stakeholders ie. TAFE's, Group Training Companies, Industry groups, careers teachers and employers. I now have a strong rapport with all and they know I am only a phone call away.

"I have a twenty year old son, Jaye, who is completing an apprenticeship in landscaping. He enables me to keep in touch with 'Y' generation thinking which has helped in formulating ABBTF marketing to young people."

If you would like to know more about the ABBTF's assistance for apprenticeship recruitment and other programs, contact Jane Alexander and she will be glad to help. Jane can be contacted on (03) 9209 5777 or email janeal@holmesglen.vic.edu.au

Matt Vaseralli Takes It Easy

When Matt Vaseralli came to Australia from Italy as a 14 year old in 1956 he would not have known that he would go on to have a major impact on the status of bricklaying training in Victoria.

Matt, Bricklaying Co-ordinator at NMIT, is retiring in December and has been teaching bricklaying skills for 39 years.

After arriving in Australia he went straight to work in a factory followed by a stint as a brickies labourer. He completed his apprenticeship and then ran his own bricklaying business.

Way back in April 1969 he started teaching at the Collingwood Tech the only bricklaying school in Victoria at the time. An involvement with the Bricklayers Union, starting in 1964, saw Matt at the forefront of campaigns to improve facilities and the number of bricklaying facilities in Victoria.

This led to a factory at Preston being converted to create a bricklaying school and was followed later by Dandenong TAFE and others.

Matt sees a bright future for a bricklaying career with the ABBTF's subsidy scheme, which he campaigned for, and the schools Step Out Programs.



Matt Vaseralli at Northern Melbourne Institute of Tafe (NMIT)

"Bricklaying now has a real standing in the industry and the Step Out program has created more applications for pre apprenticeships and full apprentices. We don't have to advertise for applicants any more the demand is so great.

The rate of up skilling in Victoria is also very pleasing.

"We are seeing bricklayers who did not complete their apprenticeships coming back to complete their formal training and this is raising standards," said Matt.

Matt and his wife Laura plan to renovate their home, do some travelling and spend more time with their six month old grandson. He will also continue to his charity work with the Holy Cross Monastery at Templestowe.

Thanks you for your contribution to bricklaying Matt. Have a great retirement!