

March 2010

Deadlines for Claiming Subsidies

ABBTF apprentice subsidies to bricklayers have proved to be a great success in generating growth in apprentice numbers. However, a number of employers are at risk of missing out on their subsidies by registering and claiming their apprentice too late.

Bricklayers employing apprentices should be aware of the following deadlines for claiming subsidies –

1. Registration of apprentices:
- **6 months** from the date of indenture or signing as a recommencement.
2. Claim for annual subsidy:
- **3 months** after completion of each year.

Housing Increase Impacts on Skill Shortage

A further lift in housing starts in Victoria is impacting on the shortage of skilled tradesmen needed in the industry. HIA figures show that housing commencements will increase by 8% making the fourth straight year of growth in housing.

Bricklayers are busy and apprentice numbers are increasing, however more training is needed to satisfy demand and growing skill shortages in the future.

ABBTF's strategy to address the skill shortage includes promotion of the trade, its image and career path opportunities, giving school students a hands on taste of bricklaying, supporting pre-apprenticeship training, supporting mature age apprentices and subsidising employers hiring apprentices.

Why do Employers take on an Apprentice?

An extensive national survey of bricklayers last year, asked the reasons why employers take on apprentices? The response was:

- Makes good business sense
- An apprentice is more likely to stay with an employer over the 3-4 years
- Because the employer was an apprentice once
- It costs less to employ an apprentice

It was also interesting that 54% of bricklayers said they break-even or make money with an apprentice in the first year. Obviously the earlier the training happens, the more productive the apprentice becomes.

Jane Alexander – Out and About

ABBTF manager, Jane Alexander is dedicated to addressing the skill shortage in bricklaying to ensure Victoria has a healthy workforce for the future as she knows the retiring workforce is a real threat to this.



Jane with Chris Reid of CP
& JM Reid Bricklaying

She says it is important to let young people coming into the trade know that there is a real future to run your own business and they need to think of themselves as the next generation of employers.

Jane works closely with all TAFE's delivering bricklaying as well as improving apprentice employment opportunities and addressing attrition.

She is well known to many in the industry and her busy schedule involves setting up and attending up to 40 careers expos each year for students to give bricklaying a go at her try-a-trade stand. The students come through and get to lay some bricks and see how highly skilled the trade is.

She has developed a strong network of partners in the industry which has been important in achieving excellent growth in apprentice employment training with apprentice numbers in Victoria increasing by 80% over the last six years.

Jane is enthusiastic about helping the trade and her message is "Put on an apprentice, as they can be a valuable and productive member of your gang."

Apprentice Pay and Conditions

We have been receiving a number of requests on apprentice pay and conditions from employers. To receive current information, contact ABBTF by email on abbtf@holmesglen.vic.edu.au or call 1300 66 44 96.

Avatar Star was a Brickie!

Sam Worthington, the star of the blockbuster movie Avatar, was a bricklayer. Sam, originally from WA, spent some time working on site as a bricklayer in Queensland. While bricklaying does provide a career path in construction and other industries, we never thought it would lead to Hollywood stardom.

Outstanding Apprentices

ABBTF sponsored award presentations were recently held at Gippsland TAFE and Master Builders Association (MBA) to recognise their most outstanding apprentices. These young award winners are great examples of the high quality of young people in bricklaying apprenticeships.

Gippsland TAFE 2009 Award Winners:

- Best 1st Year: Matthew Dowsett
Employer: WJ & M Bricklaying



L-R: Phil Thompson, General Manager Education & Business, GippsTAFE, Matthew Dowsett, Jane Alexander, ABBTF Vic Manager and Richard Gubbins, GippsTAFE Board Member

- Best 2nd Year: Ashley Baxter
Employer: Steven Heywood



L-R: Phil Thompson, Ashley Baxter, Jane Alexander and Richard Gubbins

MBA Chairman's Award – Gippsland Apprentice of the Year 2009:

- Alan Beechey
Employer: J & J Bricklayers



L-R: Alan Beechey, receives his award from Peter Lowe, MBA Section Chairman of Gippsland

ABBTF congratulates these award winners who are excelling in their trade and who bring high quality skills, competence and future leadership potential to the bricklaying trade.



Victoria Competes at WorldSkills in Brisbane

Victorian apprentices will be competing at the 2010 National WorldSkills competition to be held in Brisbane from Friday 7 to Sunday 9 May 2010.

Over 500 competitors from 30 regions around Australia will compete for a national title. Over 80,000 visitors are expected to attend the free public event. ABBTF is a sponsor and will be assisting with the judging.

Medalists may advance to the International WorldSkills competition in London in 2011. In 2009 Nigel Croke won Bronze in the bricklaying competition at the International WorldSkills competition in Canada.

"This is where you will see the cream of Australia's bricklayers demonstrating their great technical skills. It's an event that nobody in the construction industry should miss," said Jane Alexander.

Victorian apprentices competing in Brisbane are:

- Ben Davies • Grant King
- Joseph Mark • Marc Howard

These talented apprentices have won their regional WorldSkills competition and are keen to give it their best shot and compete at the highest level.

New Look for ABBTF

Our newsletter "Aussie Bricklayer" has been redesigned and renamed to focus on the bricklaying trade. Our aim is to lift the image of bricklaying, promote the benefits of training and make the industry aware that putting on an apprentice "makes good business sense". We hope you continue to enjoy the articles in our Newsletters to come.

In January 2004 a special ABBTF mature age payment was launched to assist apprentices aged 23 and over with a \$2,000 payment on completion of the first year.

A total of 117 apprentices have been paid the subsidy to date. This equals \$234,000 and shows that we are serious about helping apprentices in what can be a difficult first year.

ABBTF has identified many excellent candidates for bricklaying apprenticeships in their early to mid 20's. These people have found that they are well suited to the trade after spending time at university or in an office job. Mature apprentices make excellent employees due to their work ethic and enthusiasm to learn. The support from ABBTF has often made the difference in starting an apprenticeship and leading to a successful career.

ABBTF Support for Mature Age Apprentices

ABBTF is well known for its support for school leavers who are considering their career options through many Step Out Programs (SOPs). Many bricklaying apprentices have also been able to get started in the trade thanks to the ABBTF's \$6,000 subsidy for employers taking on an apprentice.

But it is important to note that we have not forgotten mature age apprentices who can be disadvantaged due to a lack of award coverage in Victoria for adult apprentices.

