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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tradies – powerhouses for the future**

When it comes to careers for school leavers, tradies get a bad rap.

But just why *is* it that four in five Australian parents (79%) **1**. want their kids to go to uni after leaving school, rather than do an apprenticeship? To those already enjoying the apprenticeship lifestyle, it’s a no-brainer.

At a time when Australia is desperate for more skilled workers, school leavers are going to university based on the idea that this is the only way to a secure future.

But more times than not, they would be better suited to doing something they’re truly interested in, earning while they learn, and with little or no debt at the end of their training.

“We’re unnecessarily setting up a generation with unrealistic job expectations and large student debts,” says Colin Fitzpatrick, CEO of the Timber and Building Materials Association (TABMA) and **TABMA Apprentices and Trainees.**

“There are thousands of great and rewarding jobs out there that don’t require a degree, with well-paying, upwardly mobile careers.

“And given the rising cost of formal education, a traineeship is a far more cost effective training option.”

Most Vocational Education & Training (VET) students get priceless industry experience in a genuine work environment, while earning, making it easier for them to find relevant employment at the end of their studies.

TABMA Apprentices and Trainees employs apprentices and trainees in hundreds of vocations and specialises in placing them within the timber, construction, forestry, furnishing and manufacturing industries across Australia.

These are industries based on the ultimate renewable resource: timber; sophisticated industries at the cutting-edge of innovation, with sustainable forest management programs, advanced robotic precision manufacturing, biomaterials, engineered/cross-laminated timbers and more, all with exciting job prospects.

And when it comes to employability, money and earning potential, a trade option also often comes out on top.

Of 2014’s apprentice and trainee graduates, 84.1 per cent were employed after completion**2**. By comparison, just 68.8 per cent of university graduates from the same year looking for full-time work found it within four months**3**. And the median full-time income for a (VET) graduate is often substantially more than that of a uni graduate**4**.

Jake Wiggins is an apprentice with McKay Timbers, in Tassie. Jake went straight on to do his Certificate III in Sawmilling and Processing through **TABMA Apprentices and Trainees** after finishing Year 12 in 2015, and not only enjoyed learning about different types of timber, but also being paid to learn!

“I would recommend a timber traineeship to anyone who is interested in gaining a qualification while working full-time in a hands-on role,” says Jake. “I’ve learned skills for life.”

Choosing VET does not mean you will be stuck in one place either. "Training for a trade equips you for jobs all over the world,” Colin says.

The VET sector currently provides training courses for 9 out of 10 occupations predicted to have the greatest growth of new jobs over the next five years**5**. It is definitely equipping Aussies with the skills employers need.

The top trades experiencing skills shortages in Australia in 2017 **6** are:

* Bricklayer
* Stonemason
* Painters
* Glaziers
* Fibrous plasterer
* Solid plasterer
* Roof, wall and floor tilers
* Cabinetmaker
* Air-conditioning and refrigeration mechanic
* Baker
* Pastry cook
* Butcher
* Arborist
* Hairdresser
* Automotive electrician
* Motor mechanics
* Sheetmetal trades worker
* Panelbeater
* Vehicle painter
* Locksmith

**TABMA Apprentices and Trainees** helps young people make a smooth transition from school, unemployment or other employment to the workforce in accredited training.

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1. Skilling Australia Foundation and McCrindle Research

2. National Centre for Vocational Education Research

3, Graduate Careers Australia data

4. National Centre for Vocational Education Research and Graduate Careers Australia

5. Commonwealth Government Department of Employment

6. The Australian Department of Employment.

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