



Australian Government

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# Minister's Award for Excellence for Commitment to Australian Apprenticeships Finalist

## Quentin Sickerdick

North East Vocational College  
Training and Development Coordinator (South Australia)



After planning on becoming a mechanic, Quentin Sickerdick was unable to find an Australian Apprenticeship with garages in his hometown of Lobethal, South Australia and instead began a carpentry and joinery apprenticeship with his father. It had its challenges, and its rewards.

'I was the only one of four boys to work with our father,' Quentin says.

'It was difficult living at home and working with dad. It meant I couldn't get away with any mistakes—though that did teach me excellence, attention to detail and to do something right the first time—something I've carried through with me today.'

In fact, Quentin's demonstrated his commitment to excellence early on in his career when he competed in the WorldSkills Australia competition in 1986. He was also awarded Best Building Apprentice through the Australian

Institute of Building. His skills were widely recognised when he won the prestigious Florence M Taylor Award for most outstanding building apprentice in 1987.

Quentin completed his Australian Apprenticeship in 1988, and continued to work in the family business for 10 years, gaining his building license and later taking over the business until health issues forced him to consider a career change. Quentin decided to move into training so he could continue in the industry he loved and began working at the Port Adelaide Training and Development Centre in 2002. After four years, he was asked to contribute to the establishment of the North East Vocational College.

'I was asked to come in and set up the workshop to provide an excellent training environment,' Quentin explains.

'That involved sourcing all the tools and equipment to get it operational in 12 months, which was no small thing. The workshop is the size of one and a half houses.'



Quentin has been with the North East Vocational College for four years now. He enjoys his role and works hard to inspire excellence in his Australian Apprentices.

‘It’s all about quality and attention to detail. It doesn’t matter who it is—whether it’s someone coming through for a short customised training program for a week or apprentices doing advanced roofing, I always aim high and possibly expect too much from people, but it works for me,’ Quentin says, adding that he is sometimes teased for being a hard taskmaster.

‘They know every time they’ve got me that they’re in for a hard time. The Australian standards are the minimum—I see nothing wrong with exceeding the standards!’

And it does work well for him. Quentin experiences great success with Australian Apprentices. He wants to see each of them succeed and reach their full potential, and works hard to help them do so.

‘I can make a difference to people’s lives as well, which was something I’d never really thought of,’ Quentin says.

As well as providing training, Quentin works closely with Australian Apprenticeships Centres to connect employers with apprentices and trainees.

‘Quite often we’re the first point of contact before someone signs up an Australian Apprentice because of a referral. People ask how we deliver training. They want to put a face to the name—obviously we get questions as well about the apprentice by some very good employers. It works out really well for all parties involved,’ he says.

‘It’s gone full circle on numerous occasions. I’ve had people call me as recently as last Thursday—an apprentice I managed four years ago asked if I could put anyone his way because he’d like to take on an apprentice. This happens three or four times every month.’

From completing his own training, to training the next generation, Quentin has seen many changes over time, including more flexible training and more structures in place to support Australian Apprentices.

‘Years ago you sat in a group with 20 people and if you passed it was entirely up to you—not the trainer—whereas these days a lot more responsibility is put on the trainer to get the individuals competent,’ he says.

‘In my career there have been some very good changes within the Australian Apprenticeships system.’

