



THRIVING:
PEER apprentice Amelia O'Donald
Picture: MIKE BURTON

WOMEN FIND A PLACE IN TRADES

WOMEN are urged in the wake of this International Women's Day to find their next challenging and rewarding career in a trade.

Trade training organisation PEER is celebrating the females employed in the industry and encouraging more to join those already experiencing success.

They include PEER apprentice Amelia O'Donald, who is in her fourth year of a data and voice communications apprenticeship following the completion of a pre-vocational course in electrotechnology after her Year 12 studies.

"I wanted to familiarise myself with the industry and to get an understanding as to what apprenticeship pathway I wanted to go down," she says.

"Applying for an apprenticeship with PEER was a no-brainer because they offered a variety of trades that I knew I wanted to explore.

"It's been the most challenging and rewarding experience. I've realised that there's nothing unusual about being a woman in a trade."

PEER chief executive Peter Nolan says many of its 250 host organisations across South Australia have expressed interest in seeing more women come through the trades for placement.

"The industry can often be viewed as a male-dominated industry but we are hoping that PEER apprentices like Amelia, and the other great female apprentices we've had train with us over our 30 years, can showcase the strong and reliable careers that women can establish in a trade," he says.

"Whether it's plumbing, electrical, data communications, airconditioning or refrigeration trades, there is something for everyone."

PEER placed O'Donald with her host employer Apex Communication Technologies and she continues to thrive in her new work environment.

"I'm extremely happy in my workplace," she says. "My trainers, mentors and colleagues have been nothing but supportive and encouraging."

"I'm always challenging myself and pushing myself to be the best I can be."

"A dream of mine is to eventually open my own business and I hope to get closer to that goal within the next five years."

"In the meantime, I hope to see more women trying and taking up a trade."

"It's an exciting industry that I'm proud to be part of."

WOMEN SHOWING THEIR METTLE

ALISHA Errington enjoys seeing the surprise on people's faces when she tells them about her job. Errington, 27, works as a coil farmer at Fielders, where she operates overhead cranes and forklifts, moving coils of steel to manufacture fencing and roofing sheets.

"It definitely challenges people's perceptions," she says. "Everyone here is welcoming and you're treated equally regardless of whether you're male or female."

"My background was in retail and customer service, but the hours were inconsistent and I'd been looking for something trade-based and more hands on."

"I would highly recommend a job in the steel industry. It can be hard work but it's very fulfilling looking back at what you've made."

Errington was underemployed when she was referred to the Women in Steel program by her Workskil Australia employment consultant.

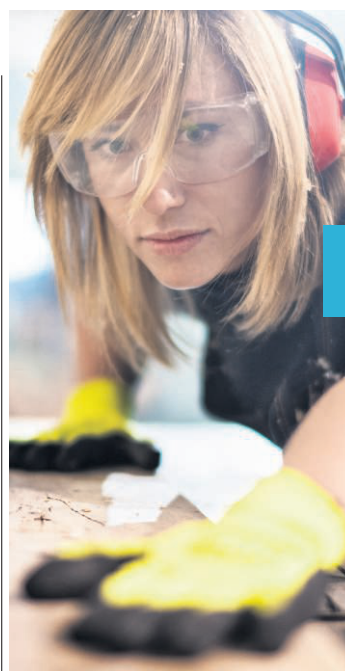
She completed four weeks of accredited training – gaining her white card and high-risk forklift licence – and took on three work experience shifts before securing full-time work with



CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS: Coil farmer Alisha Errington. Picture: AAP/KERYN STEVENS

Rubicor Workforce and being placed with host employer Fielders. An initiative of employment services provider Workskil Australia, the Women in Steel program provides women with experience in steel manufacturing.

Graduates are employed by Rubicor Workforce, which then places them with host companies in BlueScope such as Fielders and Lysaght.



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