

Comet inspires youth careers

If you're keen to get a start in the construction industry as an apprentice or trainee and are not sure where to start, Comet Training has come up with the answer.

Comet recently ran a five-week, pre-vocational training course in carpentry, aimed at young people who are finishing or have just finished school and who want to learn a trade.

Conducted by John Lawler, the course covered a broad range of skills, including basic health and safety, roofing and carpentry. One young worker who completed the course, Shane Reilly, 15, said it had made all the difference in getting him an apprenticeship.

"I went for an interview with Hansen & Yuncken. There were 58 other people there, but once they saw I had done some training and had some practical experience, it made all the difference," Reilly said.



LEARNING THE ROPES

One of the apprentices on the Comet pre-vocational course practises his roof frame skills.

Andrew Garland, 16, said he secured a place in a 12-month TAFE course after the Comet training. And Shane Watson, 16, from Emu Plains, said he had picked up a lot of practical tips during the five weeks. "We've done our basic skills to give us a bit more confidence. It gives you some idea of what lies ahead," Watson said.

Comet's course co-ordinator Ian

Cochrane said the organisation held pre-vocational courses as funding was allocated by the Department of Education and Training, and that they covered different areas such as carpentry, bricklaying or roof tiling.

If you know a young person looking to get a start in the industry, contact Comet Training on 9649 5000.

Union wins wage rise case

The CFMEU has been successful in its case to raise apprentice rates of pay for on-site building and construction apprentices.

Apprentices will receive a pay increase from February 1 of \$23.95 per week, with another increase of \$23.90 from February 1, 2008. Junior (under 21) third and fourth-year apprentices and adult apprentices will receive an extra \$23.95 from November 1, 2008.

These increases will be in addition to whatever is awarded in the state wage cases in 2007 and 2008.

NSW apprentice poster boy Andrew Cheung was a witness for the union's case. The Howard Government's WorkChoices laws mean not all apprentices will receive these increases.

But in NSW, Morris Lemma's Labor Government has passed new youth labour laws to ensure all under 18-year-old apprentices

being paid at the award rate will receive these increases.

If you are over 18 contact the union's Industrial Department to see if you qualify for an increase.

Another victory

The CFMEU has been instrumental in helping secure another win for apprentices with the lemma Labor Government agreeing to exempt employers from paying workers compensation premiums for apprentices they employ. Instead the Government will pick up the tab, starting January 1 this year.

Apprentices Organiser Brad Parker was ecstatic about the initiative. "It's an incentive to put on an apprentice, which is what governments need to be offering in this time of skills shortages," he said.

However, he warned the policy could be short-lived if the Liberals win the March 23 election.

WHO QUALIFIES

YES

Apprentice 1 Employed by a partnership, trust or sole trader regardless.

Apprentice 2 Employed by a Pty Ltd company and under 18 and if their rate of pay was solely set by the Building and Construction Industry (State) Award prior to 27 March, 2006.

Apprentice 3 Employed by a Pty Ltd company and under 18, if their rate of pay is set by a Federal Notional Agreement Preserving this Award after March 27 last year.

Apprentice 4 Employed by a Pty Ltd company regardless of their age, if their federal EBA contains reference to paying them as per the Award. There are enforceability questions if the EBA was made post-March 27 last year.

NO

Apprentice 5 Employed by a Pty Ltd company and under 18 and their rate of pay is set by a federal EBA which pays an equivalent or higher rate than in the Award.

Apprentice 6 Employed by a Pty Ltd company and is 18 or over, if their enterprise agreement does not contain a reference to paying them as per the Award.