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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

International Centre
for Technical and Vocational
Education and Training



An Australian Government Initiative

A U S T R A L I A N A P P R E N T I C E S H I P S

Your Life. Your Career. Your Future.



**The importance
of good
groundwork:
Kevin Sheedy**

Former AFL coach,
AFL legend and
former plumber



**Employer of
choice: Neil
Perry**

Business owner and
celebrity chef



**Chirpiest of all
chippys: Scott
Cam**

Television
personality, 2014
Gold Logie
winner and carpenter



**More than just a
brush with
fame: Renya
Xydis**

Business owner and
hairdresser to the
stars



**Skills behind
the winning
kick: Andrew
Ryan**

Former NRL player,
NRL education and
welfare officer and
landscaper



**Love for
outdoors leads
to carpentry:
Brad Meyers**

Former Gold Coast
Titans and Brisbane
Broncos forward and
carpenter

UNESCO-UNEVOC PROMISING PRACTICES

Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors Program

Changing perceptions

2017

The Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors Program

Context

In 2015, 278,000 young people were apprentices in Australia, a drop of 11.8 per cent compared to 2014 (NCVER, 2016; ABS, 2016). Only 170 million youth entered into apprenticeships in 2015, almost 100 million fewer than in 2005.

The reason for dwindling interest in apprenticeships among young people lies partly in the negative public perception of apprenticeships and traineeships, particularly the view that careers which require a vocational degree are of lower status than careers requiring a university degree. A survey report in 2007 found that young people felt that participation in apprenticeships was appropriate only for academically less-successful students, and survey participants also cited 'inadequate pay' as a reason to forego becoming an apprentice (Misko et al., 2007).

In 2011, an expert panel reported that negative attitudes toward apprenticeships and the traditional trades significantly impacted the ability of the apprenticeship system to attract candidates (McDowell et al., 2011). The panel recommended that the Australian government make an effort to re-establish the status of apprenticeships and traineeships as a valued career pathway, with the expectation that improved status would, in the long run, increase the apprenticeship enrolment rate and also facilitate young people's access to employment. In response to the recommendation, in 2013 the Australian Government launched the Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors programme.

Overview

<i>Implemented by:</i>	The Government of Australia*
<i>Where:</i>	Australia, since 2013
<i>Theme:</i>	Youth employment Image of TVET
<i>Funding:</i>	Government-funded
<i>Status:</i>	As of 2017, more than 200 active Ambassadors

Australia has a well-established apprenticeships system, but a steady decline in the enrolment rate has raised concerns. One of the main causes of this decline is the negative public perception of apprenticeships. The Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors Program aims to raise their status.

The programme recruits prominent figures and high-performing former apprentices and trainees as ambassadors, then organizes events and business forums where ambassadors showcase the apprenticeship system. An online platform increases the programme's outreach, sharing success stories about former apprentices and enabling the public to invite ambassadors to their local events. As of 2017, the programme has reached 6 million people across Australia.

* VET Stakeholder and Channel Management Team, Skills and Training Cluster, Department of Education and Training, Australian Government.

The initiative and its impact

The Apprenticeships Ambassadors programme identifies and appoints ambassadors to promote the benefits of the apprenticeship system to students, parents and businesses. As of 2017 the programme has more than 200 ambassadors who have appeared at numerous events organized by the Department of Education and Training, as well as at local events. The events are promoted via social media, and a dedicated website offers extensive information on the ambassadors.

Data collected by the department indicate that, as of 2017, the programmes' media coverage and public relations activities have reached nearly 6 million people.



Insights

Mobilizing two types of ambassadors

The programme has two 'tiers' of ambassadors. 'Tier 1' ambassadors are public personalities in Australia: well-known people who have had direct experience with apprenticeships (including television celebrities, sports stars, etc.). Their fan base allows the programme to reach a wide audience. 'Tier 2' ambassadors are former apprentices or trainees who were selected through national programmes such as WorldSkills Australia and the Australian National Training Awards, and those who have won prizes. These ambassadors range in age and are from various industries and cultural backgrounds. They make up most of the ambassadors and are often not known to the public, but they are successful and exemplify the achievements attainable through apprenticeships. Their role is to share success stories that audiences can easily relate to.

The ambassadors' public appearances and stories are targeted at potential apprentices (i.e. youth aged between 15 and 25) as well as at people whose opinions may influence youth in their decisions regarding taking up an apprenticeship (e.g. parents).

The ambassadors challenge negative perceptions by communicating the key benefits of undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship, including: greater employability, higher job security, larger earning potential and, a broader range of work options.

Approaching employers

Recruiting more apprentices or trainees requires making more apprentice job placements available. Therefore, promoting apprenticeships requires encouraging employers to become part of the apprenticeship system. Accordingly, ambassadors visit business forums and meet employers to address any concerns they may have about hiring an apprentice or a trainee. Within this target audience, small businesses (fewer than 50 employees) are a priority. Although they employ almost half of the workforce in the private sector in Australia (DIISRTE, 2012), small businesses are often reluctant to employ an apprentice. Ambassadors address their fears of trained

apprentices leaving to join larger companies (Smith and Smith, 2005). Another task performed by ambassadors is to encourage employers in male-dominated industries to hire women, including in trades that involve demanding physical work (Smith and Smith, 2005).

Delivering messages in multiple ways

The programme's website complements the physical events. As not all of the ambassadors are professional spokespeople, the delivery of key messages at live forums is supplemented by online articles and videos that convey the experiences of all of the ambassadors in an accessible format.

In addition, the programme's website features an interactive map that shows where the ambassadors are located, with links to articles about the ambassadors. In one click, online visitors can identify the ambassadors who live in their region, then invite them to local events. Website users can search for ambassadors by occupation, industry, state and name.



The interactive map displays the location of active ambassadors (© Australian Government)

Looking forward

The Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors Program is fairly new, and changing perceptions takes time, so its impact on the nation's perceptions of apprenticeships has not yet been measured. However, ambassadors have indicated that the responses to their presentations are positive, and that students, parents and schools appreciate the information and insights they provide.

As of 2017, the Australian Government Department of Education and Training is developing survey tools to assess attitude and perception changes among the participants at ambassador events.

References

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Learn more about the Australian Apprenticeships Ambassador Program

The team behind the Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors Program helped us compile this document. They may answer your questions at apprenticeshipsambassadors@education.gov.au

You will also find more references on the initiative in our website at: http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=PP_Ambassador



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