

## Apprentice Training



On behalf of the Master Builders Board, I am writing to all our builder members with an urgent plea to train apprentices.

Statistics from the Construction Training Fund (CTF) indicate that apprentice commencements in the building and construction industry have fallen 30% over the last 2 years due largely to the down-turn in work.

As a builder myself, I know it's easy to find 100 reasons why it's too difficult to take on an apprentice or trainee, but it's time to change and adopt a "can do" attitude and invest in the future of our industry by training our youth.

Although sub-contractors are the major employers of labour these days, builders need to co-ordinate and help fund the training of apprentices on their sites.

With improved economic conditions in the housing industry, following interest rate reductions, growing population and more land being released, it won't take long before skill and labour shortages rear their ugly heads again.

What the building industry is facing at the moment is a supply and demand problem – we aren't attracting enough young people wanting to embark on a career in the building industry and there aren't enough builders willing to take on apprentices.

This will create the so-called "perfect storm" before we know it and the headlines will again focus on housing affordability issues, skill shortages, construction delays and inadequate housing.

The Master Builders Board has discussed this matter extensively over the last few months and realize that there are no easy answers and no quick fixes.

What is desperately needed is for builders to now show leadership and take on a number of apprentices based on the amount of work you have on. You can do this by either employing an apprentice directly or hiring one via a group training scheme. There are at least 8 reputable group training schemes across WA, including in regional areas.

Master Builders has set our members a target of employing an additional 100 building apprentices between now and the end of the year. We also intend to promote each of our members who currently employ and /or train apprentices or trainees via our website and Master Builder magazine.

Another initiative that we are developing is a Jobs Board on our website which will list the contact details of those seeking an apprenticeship and those employers looking for an apprentice.

We are very fortunate in WA that we have the Construction Training Fund to subsidize the employment of building apprentices and trainees. For some of our trades in particularly short supply such as bricklayers, plasterers and tilers, these subsidies can be as high as \$14,000. A schedule of current subsidy rates is attached.

The future of the building industry lies in the hands of builders. Unless we are all prepared to stand up and be counted we deserve to cop what lies ahead and it won't be good for anyone.

Please give this matter your serious consideration. Within your own business, please discuss how you might be able to take on an apprentice or trainee on one of your construction projects. If you already train an apprentice or trainee, please let Skye (skye@mbawa.com or 9476 9808) know at Master Builders so we can record your details.

Thank you in anticipation of your support. Please contact me personally on 0412 923 158 if you have any other good ideas on how to boost the numbers of our apprentices.

Yours sincerely,

**John Ripp**  
Master Builders  
President