

NATIONAL SAFE WORK MONTH

New course to equip construction apprentices with life-saving mental health tools

In proud partnership with Master Builders Western Australia (MBAWA), a new training course based on the successful First Aid for Mental Health program has been designed by St John WA to support young people working in construction - especially those just starting out.

The face-to-face interactive course has been specifically designed to raise awareness and improve understanding of mental health in building and construction, focusing on the mental health issues that are particularly relevant to construction apprentices.

Construction work can be tough, both physically and mentally.

A 2024 University of Western Australia study revealed suicidal thoughts and behaviours among WA construction workers were about three times higher than those seen in the adult Australian population.

For apprentices, it's often their first job, their first exposure to site culture, and the first time they face intense work demands or isolation.

The Mental Health Awareness for Construction Apprentices course was developed using a structured approach to ensure that the training is engaging, industry-specific and directly meets the needs of construction apprentices.

The course is about equipping people with knowledge that could one day save a life.

It covers:

- What "mental health" really means,
- The mental health continuum in real life,
- Construction-specific risks and protective factors,
- Industry-specific stigma and barriers,
- Early warning signs of stress, anxiety, depression and suicidality,
- Easy-to-use stress management tools, and
- How to listen, support, and refer a mate in need.

Master Builders WA is strongly recommending all employers enrol their first-year apprentices as part of their standard onboarding procedure.

AE Hoskins, which won Employer Trainer of the Year at the 2025 Master Builders WA Awards, has done just that, with a group of their apprentices attending the first session on August 22.

Master Builders WA CEO Matt Moran said when employers invest in the wellbeing of their apprentices, the entire industry benefits.

"If we want to position building and construction trades as a career of choice for young people, we first need to ensure they are being looked after on site. For many apprentices, it's their first job, and that can cause stress," said Mr Moran.

"Employers like AE Hoskins, who invest in their apprentice's psychological safety during this adjustment period, are more likely to retain these young people over the course of their apprenticeship."

"This is critical if we want to build a bigger, more robust and healthy workforce for the future."

Apprentice plumber Frankie Roberts and apprentice electrician Thomas Dobson are employed by AE Hoskins and were part of the first cohort to complete the course.

“I think it was really good,” Frankie said. “I think it’s as important as learning general first aid.”

Thomas agreed.

“Obviously it’s a hard topic to discuss, but Wayne the trainer got around it and made sure we know the basics and how to deal with it,” he said.

“It’s good to learn about [mental health issues] - especially working in construction or any trade.

“People might not talk about it, but it’s definitely a big factor in life.”

The course includes a blend of informative presentations, group discussions and interactive activities, with the content having been tailored to meet the needs of the construction industry through real-world examples, industry-relevant statistics and language that reflects the worksite culture.

This course is delivered in person because mental health is personal.

Real-time interaction helps break down stigma, creates safe spaces, and allows shared stories to resonate - which is vital for young people who might be struggling in silence.

It has been specifically tailored for:

- First and second-year apprentices,
- Pre-apprenticeship students and school-based trainees,
- Site supervisors and leading hands,
- Tradespeople and mentors supporting apprentices.

The course will be held every month and offered to all construction workers, with MBAWA members offered a discount.

To find out more about this course, [visit MBAWA](#).

For more St John WA courses, [click here](#).

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Dropbox images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/my248ambmwsrb219x4af3/AAP8wPh5keuSQbr0AvC7pnQ?rlkey=ew02f5tpbxfcq56p8a9iadkgi&st=9wosj9kw&dl=0>

Picture caption: AE Hoskins’ apprentices Thomas Dobson and Frankie Roberts, from left to right, are learning to build safer mental health spaces.

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