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HOST QUARTERLY

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 **MIGAS**
APPRENTICES & TRAINEES

In this issue

Komatsu Australia's Kate Pemberton receiving the 2026 Australian Apprenticeships Leadership Medal from MIGAS Director, Rod Margetts.



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Editor's note



Host Quarterly returns with a strong reminder of why Australian Apprenticeships matter.

National Apprenticeship Week Australia, held from 9 to 15 February 2026, brought apprentices, employers, training providers, government and industry supporters together around the idea that skills being built on worksites today will shape the workforce Australia relies on tomorrow.

In this issue, we look back on the Week through the eyes of the people who made it happen. MIGAS visited hundreds of apprentices and trainees on sites across Australia.

We celebrated the 2025 MiScholarship recipients, a cohort that says plenty about the breadth of talent coming up. Across seven categories, these apprentices and trainees have shown skill, persistence, initiative and the kind of steadiness that good trades and professional careers are built on.

We sit down with our cover star, Craig Townsend, the 2025 MIGAS Apprentice of the Year. Craig's path into boilermaking started well away from the usual classroom-to-workshop route. His story is a reminder that apprenticeships do not belong to one age group, one background or one neat life plan.

To everyone who backed National Apprenticeship Week Australia this year, thank you. The celebrations may have passed, but the work behind it continues every day in workshops, plants, depots, training rooms and host businesses across the country.

David Hoey
Chief Executive Officer
MiGroup Australia



Migas Ltd T/A MiGroup Australia, MIGAS Apprentices & Trainees, MiRecruit, MiTraining & National Apprenticeship Week™.
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Getting Out to Give a Shout

There is something quietly powerful about watching someone learn a trade in the place where it actually counts.

Not in a classroom, not on a slide deck presented at a skills summit, but on a worksite, in a workshop, under a piece of heavy machinery or inside an industrial facility where the stakes are real and the standards are unforgiving.

That is where apprentices and trainees spend their days, and for National Apprenticeship Week, that is exactly where MIGAS went to give them a shout out.

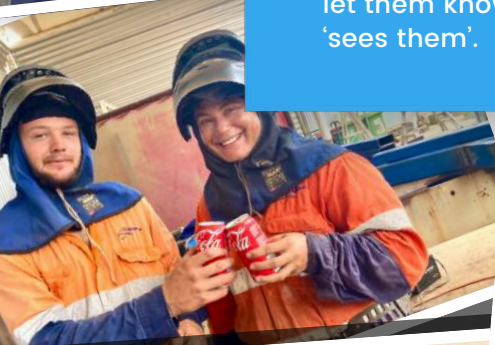
It was all about a chat, some photos, and a chance to shake hands with someone halfway through a four-year journey to let them know the industry 'sees them'.

It's precisely the kind of thing that tends to matter most to people who are in the business of learning something new.

The photos in this gallery show people doing real work in real places. They are first, second and third year apprentices, tradespeople in the making, and future ticketed professionals who will keep some of the most critical industries in this country running.

The celebrations are over for another year, but their work continues, and so does ours.

**national
apprenticeship
week**



First Aid You Can't See

Most supervisors on a job site know what to do when someone gets hurt. The injury gets treated, the incident gets logged, and work continues. But what happens when the injury isn't visible?

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, technicians and trades workers account for more than a quarter of all male suicides in Australia, making it the highest of any occupation group. And while monitoring physical safety has become second nature on most sites, managing mental wellbeing in the workplace is an obligation many employers are catching up on.

Supporting mental health at work isn't about becoming a counsellor or having all the answers. It's about knowing what to look for, what to say, and where to point someone when they need more help than a chat over 'smoko' can provide.

What to look for

Behavioural changes are often the first sign. Someone who's normally chatty is noticeably quieter. A reliable colleague starts making uncharacteristic mistakes. An apprentice who was engaged starts calling in sick. These small shifts can be easy to miss in a busy worksite environment, but might be a flag that something is up.

Other signs may include withdrawing from the team, changes in appearance, increased irritability, or talking about feeling hopeless or overwhelmed. No single sign is a diagnosis, but a pattern is worth paying attention to.

What to do

The most important thing is to say something. Find a quiet moment, away from the rest of the crew, and ask directly. "I've noticed you haven't seemed yourself lately, are you doing okay?"

Listen without trying to fix it. Avoid minimising what they're going through or jumping straight to solutions. Sometimes being heard is what matters most.

If you're concerned about someone's immediate safety, don't leave them alone and contact emergency services. For support point them to TIACS (tiacs.org), which offers free mental health support specifically for trade and blue-collar workers.

Getting formally trained

Knowing the signs and starting a conversation are important first steps. But having the confidence to sit with someone in a difficult moment and to support them towards professional help, comes with proper training.

A formal Mental Health First Aid® course takes two days and provides employers with a practical, evidence-based framework for responding to a wide range of mental health challenges in the workplace.

MiTraining offers accredited Mental Health First Aid® courses designed for the workplace.

Visit mitraining.edu.au for face-to-face and online blended delivery options.



**Enrol today in
Mental Health First Aid
at mitraining.edu.au**



BUILDING FUTURES

TOGETHER

Every apprentice on your worksite is there because you said yes. You gave them a place to learn, their first foot in the door, and a shot at a lasting career.

That's no small thing.

For 38 years, MIGAS has worked alongside employers who understand the value of passing skills from one generation to the next.

And for that we say, thank you.

 **MIGAS**
APPRENTICES & TRAINEES

From Rope Lines to Weld Lines:

On the morning of the National Apprenticeship Week luncheon, Craig Townsend had already decided how the day would end.

"I'm not going to win this," he told his fiancée as they drove in. "I don't win things like this." She told him to manifest it anyway. So he did, quietly, half-seriously, repeating it under his breath.

By the time his name was called as the 2025 MIGAS Apprentice of the Year, he was sitting in a room full of industry leaders, trying to process how wrong he'd been.

"I was shaking," he says now, still sounding slightly surprised.

"I think I was meant to do it when I did."

It's not just the award that caught him off guard, it's the path that led him there.

For nearly a decade, Craig worked in rope access, the kind of job that puts you on the side of buildings and deep inside industrial sites, suspended by lines and trust in your equipment.

His introduction to the boilermaking trade came from the periphery, watching a mate at work while acting as standby rescue.

"There was one guy I used to work around a lot," he says. "We'd go fishing, talk about work. He just said, you should give it a go."

A Late Start, a Steady Hand

Starting an apprenticeship later in life meant stepping backwards financially, walking away from something established, and committing to being a beginner again.

"It was extremely daunting. You're on your own, you've got bills, and you're starting from scratch," Craig recalls.

In the end, the decision wasn't entirely his. A change in circumstances nudged him out of his previous role. Looking back, he frames it differently.

"I think I was meant to do it when I did," he said.

These days Craig is a fourth-year boilermaker apprentice working at Ampol's refinery in Brisbane's south, hosted by MIGAS with Wood Australia. The work is technical and demanding, and sees him fabricating and

repairing pipe systems that carry fuel, gas and chemicals under pressure.

Every job begins the same way with pre-start checks, permits, conversations about what's changed since the last shift.

After that, it depends. Some days are in the workshop, others are out in the plant, navigating tight spaces, heat, noise and the kind of constraints that turn routine tasks into something more exacting.

"You've got to think about everything," he says. "What's around you, what's coming through the pipe, who's working nearby."

Over the past year, the stakes have lifted. Moving into his final stage of the apprenticeship brought a higher level of expectation and with it, a series of quiet milestones.



Craig (centre) with two of the people he credits as his great supports during his apprenticeship. Linda Lay (left), MIGAS Field Officer, and Jose Martinez (right), his supervisor at Ampol.

Craig Townsend's Long Way In



Craig receiving the 2025 MIGAS Apprentice of the Year award at MIGAS's National Apprenticeship Week business luncheon.

Proof Nice Guys Finish First

Craig completed his 6G weld certification, widely considered one of the more difficult qualifications in the trade. Not long after, he undertook his first weld inside the plant itself on a job surrounded by obstructions, completed under full radiographic testing.

"That was the moment... you feel like, alright, I can do this."

His training record reflects the same consistency with every unit completed on first attempt, strong feedback from supervisors, and a perfect score in his apprentice assessment. True to form, none of it is framed as exceptional by Craig; it's just what the job demands.

If there's one area where he speaks with more emphasis, it's safety.

"I want to go home, and I want everyone else to go home," he says. "If something goes wrong, it doesn't just affect you."

Away from the work itself, there are other signs of his considered approach to things. Craig helped revive a charity recycling initiative that had stalled and pushed for proceeds to go toward TIACS, a mental health service for tradies. He also became the moustachioed face of the Movember campaign on site.

Looking Back, Moving Forward

The apprenticeship itself hasn't been straightforward. There were moments early on where he questioned whether he'd made the right call. The volume of learning, particularly after years out of formal education, came as a shock. The maths. The materials. The realisation that every variation – stainless, mild steel, alloys – requires a different approach.

"Talking to the tradies around me helped," he says. "Just hearing this is normal. It's not always going to feel like this."

With completion approaching, Craig isn't looking too far ahead. There are more tickets he wants to pick up and, eventually, the idea of working for himself.

Apprenticeships don't always start at the beginning. Sometimes they arrive later, after other jobs, other plans, other versions of what work might look like.

Sometimes they start halfway up a building, watching someone else do the job.

And sometimes, without much warning, they end with your name being called in a room you didn't expect to be in and for something you weren't sure you'd ever be good enough to do.

"It's never too late," Craig says. He doesn't say it like advice, more like a statement of fact.



Tomorrow's best, today's proof

From boilermakers and LNG operators, to diesel fitters, electrical apprentices and water treatment trainees, the 2025 MiScholarship recipients stand tall in recognition of exceptional performance.

The MIGAS Scholarship Program showcases strong technical results, judgement, effort, resilience, safety, and leadership potential.

We proudly present this year's outstanding winners. Read more about the awards at migas.com.au.

Apprentice of the Year

Craig Townsend WINNER

Boilermaker Apprentice | Hosted by Wood Australia (Ampol Refinery)

Craig received dual honours being awarded the Apprentice Professional Excellence scholarship recognising third-to final-year apprentices already working with the maturity and skill expected of a qualified tradesperson.

In addition, the Apprentice of the Year is the Program's highest honour awarded to one outstanding apprentice from across all categories.

Craig has consistently shown technical prowess, maturity on site and a genuine commitment to helping the apprentices around him.



Trainee Professional Excellence

Ashley Maw WINNER



**LNG Production Plant
Operator Trainee |
Hosted by
Shell's QGC business**

Working in one of Australia's most technically demanding operating environments, Ashley has shown focus, maturity and the discipline required of a qualified operator.

Laura Peever COMMENDATION



**LNG Production Plant
Operator Trainee |
Hosted by Shell's QGC
business (Gladstone)**

Laura has consistently demonstrated high-level technical competency and mature conduct on site, making her a strong example for others entering the LNG industry.

Trainee Rising Star

Xanthe Shepherdson WINNER

Water Treatment Trainee | Hosted by Origin Energy

Xanthe threw herself into on-the-job learning and kept moving forward. At Origin Energy's Condabri site, she has already managed complex water treatment campaigns independently, earned certifications and developed strategies to improve plant performance.

Apprentice Rising Star

Kyle Lambert
WINNER



**Diesel Fitter
Apprentice | Hosted
by Stanmore**

Kyle has built a reputation as a second-year Diesel Fitter who absorbs knowledge quickly and keeps pushing himself. Despite personal challenges, he remained committed, supported newer apprentices and prepared jobs before being asked. His supervisors say he gets better every week.

Kayden Williams
COMMENDATION



**Fitter and Turner
Apprentice | Hosted by
Arnott's Biscuits**

Kayden's growth, attitude and dedication to the trade stood out early in his apprenticeship.

Alyssa Larsen
COMMENDATION



**Mechanical Fitter
Apprentice | Hosted
by Shephard
Transport Equipment**

Alyssa has impressed from the start, earning strong host employer feedback and outstanding training results.

Woman of Influence in Trades

Mareena Stiller
WINNER

**Electrical and
Instrumentation
Apprentice | Hosted by
Origin Energy**

Mareena is in the final stages of her apprenticeship and has already taken on work of real substance. She managed a water gathering station panel upgrade from design through to commissioning and completed a domestic electrical placement with minimal supervision.

Her supervisors describe her as an outstanding role model for future female apprentices.



Hardiness in Practice

Gabriel Lagos
WINNER

**Electrical Security Apprentice | Hosted by
Johnson Controls**

Gabriel has continued to push through demanding stages of his apprenticeship while taking on complex site tasks and building confidence in his trade.

His grit, determination and commitment to completing his trade against the odds makes him a deserving recipient of this extraordinary award.



Outstanding First Nations in Trades

Katherine Bone
WINNER

**Wellsite Operator
Trainee | Hosted by
Shell's QGC business**

Katherine brings technical capability and inspirational leadership to her role.

Her achievement is significant not only for her own career, but for the example she sets for future First Nations talent in the energy industry.





Hard Hat Energy

If you needed proof that the trades industry knows how to throw a party, the street-style pop-up at TAFE Queensland's SkillsTech campus in Acacia Ridge delivered it in full.

MIGAS brought National Apprenticeship Week to life on one of the country's flagship trades training campuses, and the result was the kind of morning that reminds you why these celebrations are worth doing.

From the first hour, the energy on site was something genuinely different to the usual industry get-together.

The support from major brands and industry partners gave the event a weight and credibility that went well beyond a morning tea with a banner attached.

The 7am start suited the crowd perfectly, with apprentices, trainers, employers and industry supporters turning out for Subway breakfast, pedal-powered smoothies, games and prizes on a morning that was giving serious hard hat energy.

A special thanks to TAFE Qld, Bunnings, and Subway for making the event unforgettable.

The Hon. Amanda Stoker MP was there, lending the occasion some well-placed gravitas and support.



The Hon. Amanda Stoker MP

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 **MiTraining**

Beyond the ticket: Hiring that sticks

For trades employers, recruitment is rarely just about finding someone with the right ticket. The better question is whether the person, the role, and the workplace have been matched well enough to last.

That is why the hiring process matters long before a new starter arrives on site. A rushed interview, vague role expectations or poor onboarding can create problems that show up soon after as frustration, absence, performance concerns or an early resignation.

Good recruitment starts with two disciplines: asking better questions up front, and setting people up properly once they accept the job.

Ask beyond the licence

Licences, qualifications and work history matter, but they are only the start. Interviews are a litmus test and should give you a feel for how a candidate thinks, communicates, handles pressure and takes responsibility.

Ask candidates to walk through recent work, not just repeat the job title on their resume. What does a typical day look like? What problems did they have to solve? Tease out real examples and you'll know whether they understand their own contribution and can explain it clearly.

Safety questions should go beyond compliance language. Strong candidates will talk about real hazards they have identified, times they have spoken up and how they look out for the people around them.

It is also worth asking what they value in a supervisor or team. This reveals how the way your workplace operates will help that person perform well.

Put the hard things on the table

One of the most useful questions is often the simplest – what are you expecting this role to be like?

Misaligned expectations around hours, travel, site conditions, physical demands or supervision are common reasons placements unravel early. A candidate may have the right skills and still be the wrong fit for the role – far better to know that before investing time, money and trust.

Where MiRecruit comes in

Recruitment takes skill, judgement, and emotional intelligence. Many trades businesses are trying to do it while also keeping jobs moving, customers happy and supervisors available on site.

MiRecruit specialises in qualified trades recruitment from the ground up. From single placements to large-scale workforce programs across multiple sites, the team manages sourcing, screening, practical assessments, and pre-employment coordination.

The goal is simple: candidates who are not just resume-ready, but genuinely closer to work-ready.

Hiring well is an investment, and done well, protects productivity, reduces churn and gives new starters a better chance of staying long enough to do their best work.

**Find the right candidate now
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We've got the talent for trades.



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We take both seriously.

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ready talent



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Placement
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