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Focus on youth 4

While the job market might currently be leaning in the employers' favour, retaining and attracting the best staff possible is still a key element of business.

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# Apprentice boom

Lauren Ahwan

**T**HE number of people taking up trade apprenticeships is growing, according to figures published by the National Centre for Vocational Educational Research (NCVER).

The figures, released last year, showed there were 428,100 apprentices in training – up 3 per cent on the same period the previous year. The number of people starting an apprenticeship or traineeship increased by 7 per cent to 290,000, while the number of people completing their training also increased by 4 per cent, to 148,400.

Growth in the number of South Australians taking up apprenticeships and traineeships was particularly strong – outstripping the rest of the nation with 22,400 new commencements, an 8.3 per cent increase.

"This has taken the total number of South Australians in training as

apprentices to 33,600, the equal second highest figure on record," says Employment, Training and Further Education Minister Paul Caica.

Nationally, growth was highest among those undertaking a "traditional" trade apprenticeship, such as electrical or plumbing, with 203,500 Australians studying to become a tradie – up 12 per cent.

NCVER managing director Tom

**Trades are well paid and recession-proof careers and the plumbing and roofing industries are keen for workers**

Karmel says the economy and structural changes within industry are the key drivers of apprenticeship numbers.

"There is substantial ongoing debate about apprenticeships and how to increase or maintain numbers," Dr Karmel says.

"We found that metal and vehicle, electrical and building apprentices

have been particularly sensitive to changing labour market conditions. However, lower-than-predicted printing apprenticeship numbers have been driven by significant structural change in the printing industry. Food trades have been more stable and less affected by labour market or structural conditions."

Trainee and Apprentice Placement Service (TAPS), which employs and places plumbing and roofing apprentices, is hoping more school leavers still awaiting university placements will consider a trade industry career.

TAPS business operations manager Mark Buhagiar says trades are well paid and recession-proof careers and the plumbing and roofing industries, in particular, are keen for workers.

"For students, this means we are perfectly placed to provide them a path to a rewarding career and, in terms of financial rewards, the future has never looked brighter with the expansion of the mining and defence industries in the state," he says.



SURPRISING: Mark O'Neill.

## S-bend to new career

**F**OR Mark O'Neill, plumbing was supposed to be a summer holiday job until he began university.

But the 23-year-old enjoyed the experience so much that he abandoned plans to study environmental science and took up a four-year apprenticeship, which he is close to completing, with the Trainee and Apprentice Placement Service, where he is employed by Holden Hill plumber JG Purdie and Son.

"I love what I do. There's no

doubt about it," Mr O'Neill says. "Plumbing is so broad – it's surprising once you get into it how many doors actually open.

"And the best thing is I don't have an HECS debt. I actually get paid to learn at trade school.

"The pay isn't that great when you start off and I think that's why some apprentices drop out, but if you can nut through it and you have a lot of support, then at the end of the day you are going to get paid just as much as a doctor."

My view

Jessica Leo  
Editor  
CareerOne



**A**S a female in the workforce I have no reason to believe that I will be treated differently to my male peers.

In advancing through my career I have also never held any fears that I will come up against a glass ceiling that will prevent me from realising my full potential.

While everybody's situation is different, the myth of male domination and the presupposition of gender discrimination in the workplace still exists.

Perhaps it's perpetuated by popular culture, perhaps it's a belief passed down from generations before us or, maybe, in some small way it still exists.

For the three women we spoke to for this issue's cover feature, the glass ceiling is little more than a term or a concept and for them, thankfully, not a reality.

In speaking with successful females who have risen to the top of their respective professions and now hold management roles, avoiding career roadblocks is all about how you position yourself and is not about gender.

No matter whether you are male or female, aligning yourself with mentors and garnering as much advice and information from others are key tools that will help you break that glass in case of emergency.

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