Why you should consider vocational training

Stories from young people undertaking traineeships

CONSIDER VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Vocational training is amazing

The aim of vocational training is to make you ‘work ready’. This means that the work and study you undertake is directly relevant to an industry, is hands on, often incorporates work experience, and will give you a qualification.

You can undertake vocational training at school!

You can pick Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects at school. Schools offer VET subjects such as: Hospitality, Beauty, Hairdressing, Music Industry, Creative Media, Sport and Recreation and Engineering etc. You will receive a recognised qualification.

What are my options after school?

Traineeship: You will combine studying a nationally recognised qualification whilst working. Traineeships usually take between 12 – 18 months to complete.

Apprenticeship: The same as a traineeship, but the qualification takes longer to complete, usually between 3 – 4 years. You will receive a trade qualification that will be recognised anywhere you live in Australia.

Vocational study: You will study a course through a ‘registered training organisation’. This can range from a short course to an Advanced Diploma. Most people at some point of their lives will undertake some form of vocational study

It is for everyone

Not only is vocational training for those who are passionate about working with their hands, many university graduates will need to gain vocational qualifications to be able to work in specific industries and to ensure they have work ready skills.

FEATURED STUDENT STORIES

So, no matter if you want to design the latest fashions, design buildings, create new recipes, look after the environment, care for animals, assist people to regain their health or defend our nation, there is a vocational course for everyone.

I hope you enjoy the following stories from young people who are undertaking or have completed traineeships. All have enjoyed their vocational pathway and are keen to share their experiences with you.

Sandie McKoy

Young people

- Stephanie Gill, Legal Administration
- Kayla Laird, Legal Administration
- Ashleigh Laird, Medical Administration
- Jake Spargo, Real Estate
- Hannah Shanks-Colla, Public & Environmental Health
- Nicole Vogel, Agriculture
- Kirstie Upton, Business Administration
- Jess Symons, Operator Movement, Army
- Jaime-Lee Digby, Navy
- Josie Lindner, Education Support
- Matthew Bethune, Civil Engineering
What is your traineeship qualification and which company are you working for?

I am undertaking a Certificate III in Business Administration (Legal) at Keating Avery Solicitors in Wodonga.

How did you find your traineeship?

I completed work experience at Keating Avery and decided during Year 12 that I would like to take a gap year and work at a law firm. After writing to Keating Avery and having an interview they offered me a 12-month traineeship.

Why did you choose to do the traineeship?

After school I knew I wanted to work in the legal field, as I thoroughly enjoyed Legal Studies. I decided to do the traineeship to get practical legal experience before going to university.

What do you do on a day-to-day basis?

My day consists of typing letters for one of the Partners, assisting with conveyancing - my duties can range from ordering title searches and certificates to drafting vendor statements and contracts and office duties such as answering the phone, photocopying and faxing. Some days I will draft Powers of Attorney, do filing and summarise police recordings.

What are the great things about your traineeship?

My traineeship allows me to gain invaluable legal experience, that will hopefully benefit me in the future. Being immersed in legal cases and working with a great group of people makes the traineeship enjoyable.

What are the not so great things?

The first few weeks were very overwhelming, as I had to learn quickly. I didn’t realise how different working in an office would be to sitting in a classroom, as you are constantly engaged in work, though I have settled in now.

What are your plans for once you have finished your traineeship?

Next year I am off to Australia National University in Canberra to study a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws. I am not sure what type of law I want to specialise in or if I want to be a lawyer but I know I enjoy learning about the law, so I will continue doing what I love!
Kayla Laird, Certificate III in Business Administration (Legal)

As a child I grew up knowing I wanted, somewhere along the way, to be involved in the legal system. Most of my childhood was filled with dreams of becoming a police woman (like in criminal minds....). Little did I know then, that joining the police force is not the only way to become involved in the legal system.

As I became older I realized how many different avenues there are to work in the law industry and trust me there are a lot. I cannot tell you how many hours I spent researching the careers available in law; including forensics, criminal anthropology, barrister, solicitor, Australian Secret Intelligent Service and the list goes on.

This may have been the reason for me studying a variety of different subjects in Year 12, which stretched from Japanese to Legal Studies to Chemistry and Biology (I know- quite a variety). However being me, I knew what I wanted, and that was to somehow get a job in law, one way or another.

When I finished Year 12 I was really passionate about studying law at university but I had decided to have a gap year to help me decide what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go, so I applied through ATEL for a one year Law Clerk Traineeship at a local law firm. I got offered the job at Albury Legal and Accounting and it has been an amazing opportunity, one in which I would gladly recommend to anyone.

Albury Legal is a small law firm, of only one solicitor who also doubles as an accountant, and we deal with a variety of different legal work. This includes criminal law, civil law, conveyancing and property law, commercial disputes, wills, probate, estates, tax and superannuation law and general law work.

Working in such a small firm gives me a greater opportunity to be more hands on and involved in certain tasks and also dealing directly with clients, barristers, solicitors and many other people associated with our firm. Although there are the basic duties as a receptionist, such as dealing with clients, booking appointments, answering the phone, filing, collecting and sorting the mail, writing letters and invoices and simple cleaning jobs there are many more tasks that have allowed me to get a glimpse of how the legal system operates and what it will be like to work in later on in my life.

In the short time I have worked at Albury Legal as a trainee, I have been given the opportunity to go to court with our solicitor, create contracts for the sale of properties, organise settlements, write up a variety of court documents including witness statements and affidavits, work closely with other law firms all over Victoria and New South Wales and perform many other tasks which I would not have otherwise been given the opportunity to do.

Because Albury Legal deals with such different areas of law, every day brings something different and new, which means there is hardly any repetitive work and a lot to learn. Working at Albury Legal has given me the opportunity to see firsthand the different processes and operations in law and as I have learned, everything is not so straight forward. At times, it is challenging, having to get my head around a lot of the complicated court processes, large variety of legal terms and different court documents, however, everyone around me is very supportive and willing to help me no matter what the problem is.

Although I initially applied for the position at Albury Legal because I wanted to work closely in the legal system, Albury Legal also has an associated accounting business, Albury Accounting, which means that along with the legal tasks I also am able to perform tasks in the accounting business too. This includes creating tax returns and organising for superfund audits.

Not only am I working at Albury Legal as a full time law clerk and secretary, but I am also undertaking a course at Wodonga Tafe to get my Certificate III in Business Administration (Legal). This course is only offered to people who are undertaking a traineeship in the law industry and can help provide for different job opportunities for people who wish to pursue a career as a legal receptionist or secretary in the future. I am hoping with this certificate that when I move to Melbourne to go to university it will help me get a job while I am living there.

At the end of year 12 I applied to a variety of different universities and a variety of different courses. And at the start of this year when all the offers came out, I got offered my number 1 choice at Deakin University in Burwood to study the double degree- Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Criminology. I am hoping in the future to become a criminal barrister, whether that is in Melbourne or some other place around the country.

This traineeship has already given me a window into what it is like to work in the law industry, and I am delighted to say that I am excited to start a career in the law industry. I would gladly recommend to anyone to undertake a traineeship as you can learn so much in your chosen industry and it is a fantastic opportunity given the chance.
The main reason I chose to do a traineeship, specifically in the medical field, is because I believed it would give me a great insight and also a bit of background knowledge for when I hopefully pursue a career in medicine. So far it has lived up to my expectations and has given me fantastic knowledge on a large variety of health issues and medical terminology, which will largely benefit me in the future.

I found out about the traineeship at ASG by going around to as many medical clinics in Albury/Wodonga as I could and handing in my resume. I think that having the initiative to hand in my resume increased my chances of getting such an amazing traineeship because the employers saw how determined I was. I was looking specifically for a traineeship in the medical industry so I also went onto many recruitment agency websites, including ATEL, to search. I had to apply for this traineeship through the ATEL website, where they then put me through to have an interview with the Practice Manager at ASG and I was successful. (Yay!)

At Albury Surgical Group I am one of nine absolutely wonderful medical secretaries. Although there is a large amount of reception staff, it is never quiet (or boring); we are always very busy (which is definitely a plus). I do many administrative tasks such as booking, changing and cancelling appointments for patients both over the phone and face to face for both initial consultations with the surgeons and also surgical procedures.

Booking surgical procedures also includes going through the instructions with the patients on how to prepare for their surgical procedure and also what is expected of them on the day of the surgery. I also do tasks, which are specific for ASG, including preparing daily consulting lists, preparing the theatre notes for the surgeons and organising anesthetists for theatre lists. Furthermore, I do many other basic administrative tasks such as scanning in documents and results, updating and creating patient files, photocopying, faxing and billing. Also, because hygiene is a high priority in the medical industry, I help clean the surgeon’s rooms, clean and bag instruments for sterilisation and do other cleaning duties. On a regular basis I also liaise with many other administrative staff in the hospitals, the other ASG branches, a large number of medical clinics around the area and also many General Practitioners.

There are many great things about my traineeship. Firstly, I get to meet and work for some of the most highly respected surgeons in the area. This gives me a great understanding of how those in the medical industry work and who the people are who are involved in many different medical processes. I have been able to learn about many different surgical procedures and increase my knowledge of medical terminology (which will also be a part of my business administration course). Not only this, but it has also greatly increased my confidence because of how regularly I communicate with people both face to face and over the phone. This traineeship also gives me the opportunity to gain life skills and experience in the work force before I go to university.

Once I complete my traineeship at the beginning of 2015, I plan to go and study medicine at university and get into paediatrics. If I am unable to get straight into medicine, I will do a double degree of Paramedicine and Nursing at Monash (which I have deferred this year) and hopefully get into medicine via the graduate pathway.

So far, although it has only been a short time, this traineeship has been absolutely amazing and if anyone has the opportunity to do a traineeship, I highly recommend it. It can give you a lot of experience and knowledge in the area that you hope to pursue a career in.
What is your traineeship qualification?

I am currently studying a Certificate IV in Property Services. This traineeship allows me to become a fully licenced Real Estate Agent.

How did you find your traineeship?

Via the Internet through MP Personnel Recruitment Services.

Why did you choose to do the traineeship you did?

I have always had a keen interest in the property market. This traineeship allows me to develop a network and talk to different people on a daily basis. Every day is different!

What do you do on a day-to-day basis?

I’m currently the acting Personal Assistant for our Principal, Chris Hood. My duties vary from day to day. Some of my duties at the moment include: liaising with potential buyers, vendors, landlords and tenants; organising and attending open homes and auctions; sending letters to required parties about progress of the sale or requesting documents from solicitors; training regularly; attending appointments and appraisals; other general office duties. This will change once I receive my Agents Representative Certificate. My duties will then include: listing and selling property; marketing myself etc.

What are the great things about your traineeship?

I work in a fantastic industry where jobs are always available. Real estate allows me to meet all sorts of people, which I love, better yet I make money doing it! There is always support available through the Real Estate Institute of Victoria, through the office or other offices. One of the best feelings in the world is helping people buy their dream home or achieve a great price when selling. I was surprised how appreciative people can be! I love receiving great testimonials back from happy clients.

What are the not so great things?

The hours can be long and the work can be stressful at the start. However, once you start seeing results it makes the 50 to 60 hour weeks all worth it.

Why did you decide to change your career direction after school from university to a traineeship?

I went to uni for a year and studied Occupational Therapy (OT). This was because I thought that university was the only option if I wanted a good career that makes decent money. OT suited my interests in sport and meeting different people, however it didn’t suit me.

Real estate offers everything I enjoy in life without needing a four year degree. I’m not saying don’t give university a go, rather really think about your career options and consider everything. Changing your career isn’t a bad thing! If you find something you love doing, like I have, then go out and do it! University isn’t the only option.

If you want to know more about real estate feel free to give me a call on 0488 201 928. I’d be happy to discuss real estate career possibilities with you.

Jake Spargo
Property consultant
Stockdale and Leggo Real Estate
I'm Nicole (middle in the picture above). I finished year twelve in 2013 without knowing exactly what I wanted to do the following year, nor having had experience in any formal job. It was a rather stressful experience as I considered how close the new year was and how unprepared I felt for the big wide world. However, it's not a necessity to know exactly what you want to do for the rest of your life, nor even in the following week, as opportunities change all the time, sometimes even for the better.

In my case, I found it advantageous simply knowing what I enjoyed and having a general idea of where I'd like to be in my future. That is, I always wanted to travel the world and as I didn't have the immediate financial capacity for that I considered how I may find a job that one day in my future would present that opportunity. Secondly, I loved biology at school and have been brought up on a beef and sheep farm, which grew a passion for agriculture in me.

Fortunately for me, the spectrum of jobs in agriculture is very broad so international business and agriculture have crossovers. Despite knowing this I was still stuck knowing exactly how to get there. I found a uni course that felt perfect for my ideal future, however, as it can only be studied in Melbourne I needed to take a gap year that would enable me to afford accommodation.

In order to fill in a whole year, what could I do that would be relevant to where I wanted to go?

At this point my dad, whose work is also related to agriculture, arrived home with a package from Kestrel Apprentice Solutions that have an office near his. I didn't understand what their role was, what a traineeship was, nor confusing acronyms such as GTO and RTO.

However, dad had booked a meeting that I was to have with a Kestrel Consultant. Skeptically, I arrived in appropriate dress and we discussed where I wanted to be in my future. I was still not sure at this point if I even wanted to continue with my plans in agriculture, however I discussed working in a place such as Elders, Landmark or Murray Goulburn and obtaining a Certificate III in Agriculture under a traineeship.

After this initial meeting at Kestrel Apprentice Solutions, I was invited to have an interview with them so that they could draw up a reference for me, as it became apparent that they were happy to employ me. This took me a while to understand.

As best as I can explain it works like this: Kestrel Apprentice Solutions is a Group Training Organisation (GTO). A GTO is one way of undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship, the other way is being directly employed by a business or organisation. A GTO employs apprentices and trainees under the relevant training contract. Thus a GTO becomes your legal employer.

Kestrel is therefore my legal employer, however I am usually only to meet with them at quarterly performance reviews, my main contact with them is faxing my timesheet so that they will pay me my regular wage. A GTO places their trainees or apprentices with host employers. The host employer is the business or organisation where you undertake your traineeship or apprenticeship and who provide supervision and guidance as you work on the job.

After Christmas break my Kestrel Consultant brought me news that Murray Goulburn Trading store in Corryong was looking for a new employee. This was also advertised in the paper, however they required fewer working hours than a full time trainee needs. Kestrel's reference for me had been forwarded to Corryong via emails through Murray Goulburn's head office in Melbourne and apparently through a number of other stores as well. The efficiency of communication was incredible and I'm lead to believe that it is an advantage of being employed by a GTO.

Corryong is conveniently located close to my family farm where I am able to live for the year. Furthermore, through Kestrel I am not restricted to one host employer. That means that despite Murray Goulburn Trading (MGT) not being able to provide my full time hours, I am able to complete the hours with another business. In this case my second host employer is LC, WL & GK Vogel, otherwise known as the farm which my parents and grandfather own.

I find that being hosted by my family's business rather than working directly for them is beneficial in many ways, especially because it ensures that I have regular, formal pay and other legal requirements are met to a professional standard. This carries advantages for my family as well. I would, from my own experience, recommend anyone who is considering working for their family business to do so through a GTO.

I completed my job interview with MGT Corryong and was accepted within the week; I should mention that the wage of a trainee may seem low to you, but don't forget it seems low to a potential employer as well, and that is a not a bad thing at all! On that note, trainees have paid leave and holidays, so all in all a trainee's wages work out well. Before my job began I still had to meet with my Kestrel Consultant. My consultant works personally with me, acts as a first point of contact between myself, my host employers and Kestrel Apprentice Solutions.

Nicole Vogel, Certificate III in Agriculture
Nicole Vogel, Certificate III in Agriculture

Solutions, monitors performance and progress, and ensures all OH&S procedures are taken care of among other things. A mandatory part of my training contract is to attend off the job training for my Certificate III in Agriculture. I’m paid to attend a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) for this training. An RTO is a training organisation selected to carry out your trade or vocational training to complete your qualification.

My RTO is Wodonga TAFE, I am expected to complete a chemical course during my work hours over a couple of days. This will help me to obtain part of my Certificate III in Agriculture. Because most trainees completing the Cert III in Agriculture live in the country, travelling to their nearest RTO for every elective would be inconvenient. Instead, a TAFE representative visits us on the job to assist us with our coursework.

I really enjoy my job here in the country. I work in such an incredibly friendly environment, unlike anything I had expected. My initial skepticism over taking a gap year has dissipated. I think its really important to work hard to obtain your goals. So at first it may seem that a gap year working in a trading store seems meagre compared to working internationally, but I’m putting in all my effort to make it a worthwhile stepping stone which I believe it has become. It’s also important to create contacts with everyone you meet; I have discussed my goals informally with my boss’s boss and even MG personnel from Melbourne with positive results. In my job I have had the opportunity to work on the road with an MG agronomist taking soil samples on local properties, canvassing with a sales representative and learning to drive a forklift. I consider these opportunities highlights because all are steep learning curves for me.

Working at the register, at the fuel bowser, on the floor advising the whereabouts of certain items, displaying products, addressing every customer as a valuable individual are all daily activities that may seem simple but over a short period of time have already granted me unexpected results in my growth as a person, including, but not limited to, my confidence with other people and my feeling of self worth.

In my particular trade, my physical health has improved by being on my feet often, moving heavy objects, digging trenches and working with animals and, lets be honest, my stunted internet availability here forces me to sleep for a healthy amount of time rather than stay up. I have been stressed by the steep transition from being in the city to living in the country full time, school to a job, short hours to long hours, knowing everyone to knowing no one, getting on top of managing cars, phones, insurance, money, medical, ID and other matters all related to becoming independent.

However, everything has and will slowly fall in to place, and I believe I will able to step confidently into the future after completing my traineeship in agriculture.
With the hands on experience that this job could give me, it would give me that idea of what I wanted to major in.

**What do you do on a day-to-day basis?**

My job is full of many things. At the start of each year we administer school immunisations to every high school in the Wangaratta Council area. It’s a very busy time of year, with lots of paper work to do. At the start of each month, we hold community immunisation sessions for the general public to come along to and at the start of winter we do flu vaccines for many businesses in and around Wangaratta. However, immunisations are just a small part of what we do.

We regularly conduct annual inspections of food premises such as cafes, restaurants, and take-away stores, as well as beauty salons, hairdressers and tattoo parlours. We’re responsible for telling supermarkets to take certain products off their shelves if a food recall has been given out and in the case of food poisoning we work alongside the Department of Health to get to the bottom of what caused the food poisoning in the first place and to make sure that it doesn’t happen again.

We complete septic tank inspections as we are a rural council and we also respond to numerous complaints about many different things like noise for example. It’s difficult to say what I do on a day-to-day basis, because my day is different each day, some days may consist of an entire day in the office, while others could begin at 7 in the morning and go till 6 at night.

Along with this gap year program, I’ll be completing a Certificate III in Business to help give me extra skills and knowledge along the way. My job is great. I happily get up every morning to go to work because I love it. The only thing that I would say is bad is that fact that I have to get up early, but that’s not very important.

**What do you plan to do once you complete your traineeship?**

Once I finish my year here at Wangaratta, I’ll be heading to Deakin University to study Biomedical Science, with a major in Environmental Health. I’ll come back to Wangaratta for 9 weeks, every year, to work full time and once my degree is finished, if a place exists for me, I’ll be back again to work full time for the Rural City of Wangaratta.

I would highly recommend to anyone that sees a position available, similar to mine, to take it on. Apply for the job. Get hands on experience, especially if you don’t know what you want to do. It’s fantastic and I can guarantee that you would love it as much as I do. The only catch to my job is that I needed to be accepted into university, which for me was not a problem because I knew that I wanted to go to university, but I’m sure there are many other jobs out there like mine, that don’t have those strings attached.

The best thing to do if you don’t know what you want to try as many things as you can, because that’s the best way to get an understanding of what you might want to pursue a career in.
What qualification did you receive from your traineeship?

When I first started my traineeship, I completed a Certificate III in Business Administration, and then had the opportunity to complete whatever certificate I wanted to do next. I chose Business Sales, as that was the area that I wanted to move into.

What industry did you complete your traineeship in?

I undertook my traineeship in the residential construction industry, an area where I never even thought twice about working in. Ever. But I loved every minute of it, almost.

Why did you choose to do the traineeship you did?

I chose to do the traineeship, as I had dropped out of my nursing course at university, and didn’t have a clue what I actually wanted to do with my working life. So I chose a career that was broad, but had many career opportunities.

What did you do on a day-to-day basis?

My job while undertaking the traineeship was a receptionist. So I undertook general duties such as: answering phones, responding appropriately to mail and emails, whether replying myself or forwarding to someone more appropriate, meeting clients and directing them to the correct office, and filing.

I also had the responsibility of preparing site supervisors to take new jobs to site (organising to start building a new home). This included getting building permits, land subdivision information and plans for the build and copying, filing and stowing these in the correct hard and computer files.

What were the great things about your traineeship?

Some of the greatest things about doing my traineeship, was discovering what I wanted to do with my life- design the perfect home for every client wanting to build. I discovered that doing a traineeship is satisfying, in that you are learning so much, in theory and practically. I found that doing a traineeship didn’t mean that I was lowering my standards, or that I was dumb. In fact, doing a traineeship revealed just how smart I was, it’s just that as a student, I learn best practically, by doing the task instead of reading about the task. I performed well in school and thought that meant I was ‘supposed’ to go to university, but in fact, doing a traineeship was the perfect education for me.

What were the not so great things?

The not so great things about doing a traineeship, let’s be honest; the money. Depending on your employer, it can vary, but you won’t be getting as much as your colleagues. You have the same feelings that you do in any job, you don’t always have a good day, you don’t always want to go to work, and you don’t always agree with everything that occurs in your workplace. But here’s news people! This is the working world, not everything is perfectly designed just for you.

But this is what makes it so great. You learn in the working world, so you learn your job in theory, but you also learn how to perform it and deal with it in the real world. You get to face all of the real issues and bumps in the road that come with every career while you are still learning. Which means, you’re allowed to make mistakes. It’s all part of the learning.

What are you currently doing now you have completed your traineeship?

Once I completed my traineeship, I managed to score myself a promotion within the company I was already working in. I was promoted to Sales Associate, which was my motivation to study business sales, while still doing my traineeship.

Now, however, I have left the construction industry. I am hoping to get a job in mental health, in the area of patient and staff assistance. Because of the area of my traineeship, it is broad enough to allow me to work in administration type roles in almost every profession that you can think of. Medicine, building, education, law, corporate, consumer, and the list goes on.

So, I definitely recommend doing a traineeship. It allows you practical education, in broad areas if you chose a subject such as business or the like. It enables you to discover job roles and different industries that you may never have thought about, or that you never thought you could work in due to school exam scores.

Plus, employers will favour an applicant that has completed a Certificate III in Business via a traineeship as opposed to completing it at Tafe any day.
What was your employment training qualification?

Operator Movements - RACT soldier who plans, coordinates, executes, controls and monitors the operational and strategic movement of personnel and equipment of the ADF.

How did you find out about the One Year Role and what was the application process like?

I think I may have read that there were now One Year Roles in the paper. I went online and filled out some forms, then I was contacted by Defence Recruiting. From there I went in for some aptitude sessions, tests, physicals and an interview. Then one day I got a call with my enlistment date. For me, the process was very straight forward and went smoothly, for others it can take years to join as the job they want isn’t available.

Why did you choose the Operator Movement role?

I read up on all the jobs you could do for one year, there were 12 of them. After reading the job descriptions, I didn’t really have much of an idea what any of it meant to be honest, but you’ll find that’s the case with most who join. I liked the sound of Operator Movements and after asking around, I narrowed down my top 3 preferences.

What did you do on a day to day basis?

After I’d completed basic training at Kapooka and finished all the courses for my job, I was posted into my unit at 3BDE, which was called JMCO (Joint Movement Control Office). On a usual day, we would have personal training (PT) in the morning for an hour, which could be anything. I lived on base, so I would go back and shower and change into cams for the rest of the day. Then we would spend the day doing various tasks that had been passed down through the Chain of Command and given out to us (the Privates) by the Corporals.

This could be organising transport from the office or you could be sent out to do various things. Sometimes you would get tasked after work to go and take care of a service flight that was coming in with soldiers coming back from overseas exercises or operations. One night I got given a task with a few other mates to go watch one of the ships unload their gear down at the dock from 10pm – 6am.

What were the great things about your traineeship?

There were lots. I actually didn’t mind Kapooka. You definitely have your rough days just like everyone else, but generally I thought it was really fun. I wouldn’t go back though, once was definitely enough. My Initial Employment Training and driver courses were good, going 4WD, convoy and blackout driving. When we got to Townsville, we went out to the RAAF Base to check out all the aircraft- that was really cool.

What were the not so great things?

Getting stuck in Bandiana at a holding platoon for a while, but I met some awesome people and did some fun things so it wasn’t too bad. Sometimes you would get bad tasks, but I guess that’s like any job. Picquets are probably the worst thing.

What are you doing now you have completed your traineeship?

Although I was tempted to stay where I’d gotten pretty comfortable, I just left Townsville and the Army a few weeks ago to undertake a Bachelor of Business (Tourism, Leisure & Event Management) at the University of Sunshine Coast. I’ve been living in Sippy Downs, which is one of the residences here. I just had my first week of classes and I’m loving it up here.
What was your employment training qualification?

My initial training was composed of an 11 week recruit school course which was comprised of intense physical fitness, fire fighting training, OHS, flood training, survival at sea and many more amazing short courses all while building a solid team. My employment training for my job (boatswains mate- firearm and weapon specialist and boarding party combat operations) included a 4 week seamanship course and an intense 6 week weaponry course.

How did you find out about the gap year program and what was the application process like?

Unfortunately at this stage they no longer run the gap year role with the Navy, however when Defence came to the school I took particular interest in the physical fitness, the pay and the amazing travel opportunities available to me with no commitment. At the end of the year, I decided to go back because it really is a lifestyle that is hard to say goodbye to. In my short one year experience I was able to fly simulated helicopters, fix and do maintenance on naval helicopters and fighter jets, spend 3 months at sea surveying the pristine oceans of Papua New Guinea and Northern Territory and made amazing friends along the way. On completion of my weapons training there are opportunities for me to travel to Singapore, Japan, Hawaii, Russia, Thailand, Fiji and many more counties.

What do you do on a day to day basis?

I wake up at 0530 every morning, go to physical training, have breakfast, and my day continues with a march down to my Boatswain Faculty where I shoot and maintain a variety of firearms, torpedoes, missiles and mines. I finish the working day at 1610 and the afternoon is mine to do as I wish.

What are the great things about your traineeship?

The best things for me are definitely the use of a different weapon every day! No day is ever the same! And in the end I have a rotating sea going roster to look forward to…. 3 months at sea, 2 weeks on land, 3 months at sea etc. It is an amazing job.

What is your plans for once you have completed your traineeship?

My plans are to finish my minimum period of service of 4 years as a weapons specialist then sign on for another 4! It is one amazing job that could be somebody’s perfect career.

Why should students consider the Navy?

I think the Navy is an amazing opportunity for students that want to travel and get paid good money to travel. The Navy pays incredibly good money to travel the world doing something you love with your best mates. There is a fair bit of discipline involved in the first 11 weeks as a recruit but after graduation it’s awesome. I highly recommend it as not only a job but as an eye opener to the real world. I have been places no one in the public can ever go and I think that is pretty cool.
What qualification did you receive from your traineeship?

Certificate III in Education Support, Catholic College Wodonga.

Why did you apply for the traineeship?

I didn’t really have an idea of what I was going to do after school. I didn’t get a very high ATAR score so I had to look at my options. I was just going to follow others down to Melbourne but once I heard of the opportunity to work within my own school as a trainee, I knew that was something that could lead me in the right direction and give me some training for future jobs or help me get into university.

What did you do on a day-to-day basis?

Each day I would go to different classes informing students about upcoming youth events, giving speeches about my experience at school, emailing staff about updates, working on my Tafe course, planning meetings, planning camps and retreats, ordering supplies and creating posters.

What were the great things about your traineeship?

While doing my traineeship, I was lucky enough to become a leader for a group of students involved in community service. I was able to participate in many different camps such as a week long hike in the Grampians National Park, retreats, canoe trips, over night camps, and a week long teachers conference in Bendigo that takes place every four years. From all my community service, I received the Education Award from our local Member of Parliament and was named Young Citizen of the Year for Wodonga.

What were some of the not so great things?

Some of the camps were very long and tiring. Many days spent trying to fight off colds that were passed around the school. I think I cooked about ten BBQ’s in total. By the end I could do it with my eyes closed.

What are you doing now that you have completed your traineeship?

Since my traineeship I have still been involved with students and the school through volunteering, mentoring and meetings. Since receiving my awards, I was able to get into studying teaching through Swinburne and have started this year online. My year at Catholic College as a trainee has lead me in many great directions from having afternoon tea with the Governor of Victoria, to being the guest speaker on International Women’s Day. And this is only the start.

Read more about Josie’s achievements in the Border Mail:

Youth Leadership Program-

Winning the Albury Show Girl competition-
In 2012 I decided to defer my course of a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil and Infrastructure)/ Bachelor of Business (Management) at RMIT and have a gap year to save up for university as well as having a break from study.

While thinking of where I could work, an opportunity came up at a local firm EDM Group for a gap year program for civil engineering. The position is to provide future civil engineering students with an insight and hands on experience for what they may undertake in the future.

I applied for the position, as I was keen to know more about civil engineering and see if it was the pathway for me. I was fortunate enough to receive the position and I started in early February, working Monday to Friday every week for approximately one year. I also worked on weekends at Bakers Delight in the Wodonga Plaza to help earn more money.

While working at EDM Group I undertook a variety of different tasks. These included working with Autocad to draft plans and make alterations, preparing excel spreadsheets for progress claims and schedules of quantities, dealing with authorities such as North East Water and Councils as well as clients. I also went out onsite with the surveyors using all the fancy equipment. I even got to work on some of my own projects while being guided along the way by my colleagues.

Now I’m at RMIT and studying civil engineering and I can say that without a doubt my experience gained at EDM Group was so enlightening that I can think about tasks and the why and how things work.

A project I currently have is called the Engineers Without Borders Challenge where I have to come up with a solution to weatherproof the homes within a village in Nepal. Straight away I was able to think of solutions that no-one else in my group could imagine as I was thinking back to when I was involved in the creation of subdivisions during my time with EDM Group.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my time off and have also loved my course. If you are considering pursuing a career in civil engineering please do look at the position at EDM Group. It comes up around October/November every year and I’m sure if you tell Sandie that you are interested in civil engineering that she will pass on the information to you as that is how I found out.