

## Role Model

Heywood building apprentice Billy Bell is fast becoming a role model for the local Indigenous community.

Billy's apprenticeship is going from strength to strength and he hopes that his example will encourage other young Indigenous people to take up a trade.

Billy has just entered the third year of his building apprenticeship with A.W. Nicholson Construction and is the only young Aboriginal person in Heywood learning a trade.

He is one of only two Indigenous students attending his trade school.

Billy, 22, has earned the respect of colleagues and his family and friends and hopes his success will change the culture in the Indigenous community so that others will also learn a trade. In his building and construction apprenticeship hosted by Westvic Staffing Solutions, Billy has gained confidence to get the most out of his TAFE studies and on-the-job opportunities.

"I enjoy the hands-on work and get a lot out of it," he said.

While focusing on the short term goals of finishing his apprenticeship and continuing work in the building industry, Billy also has his mind on more long-term goals.

"At the moment I just want to finish my apprenticeship and get my qualification and keep working in the field. Probably not straight away, but down the track I'd like to go into business myself and provide some work opportunities for other young Indigenous people," he said.

"This is not just a job; it's something that will get me a good qualification at the end of it. I can go anywhere and do anything with the skills and qualifications I'll have. Opportunities have opened up and I would love to be able to do the same for other young Indigenous people in the future by giving them a chance to start a trade and play a mentoring role for them."



There is a big travel commitment involved in Billy's apprenticeship: he lives in Heywood and travels to Hamilton and Warrnambool for work and trade school.

Westvic was so impressed by Billy's work and attitude that it nominated Billy for the national Group Training Indigenous Apprentice/Trainee of the Year award.

Field Officer Guy Sevier said Billy was receiving extremely positive feedback from trade school and his employer. "They say he is going great guns, he's one of the best apprentices they have and he's improving all the time," Guy said.

## Building Contacts

Mel Frahmien has built up strong contacts in the Portland business community in her 13 years in town and now hopes to expand those links in her role as Business Development Officer for Westvic Portland. Mel's role is to assist employers to secure motivated, skilled employees for their business at no cost, saving time and money. "It's a very rewarding job. It's great to help people to improve their lives and reach their goals" she said.

Mel and her husband Derrick migrated from New Zealand 13 years ago to Heywood where Derrick took up a forestry job. "We came over for two years but liked it and have been here ever since," she said. During that time Mel has worked in finance and administration in real estate, sales, engineering and most recently car sales. "I have built up a lot of contacts over that time which is perfect for this role," she said. "Now I aim to further develop those existing contacts and diversify into new areas." Derrick now works as a builder in Portland.

Mel can help businesses with a pre-screened shortlist of job-ready candidates sourced from Westvic's extensive database. She can be contacted on 5521 0700 or email [mfrahmien@westvic.org.au](mailto:mfrahmien@westvic.org.au).





## New Mentor

New Warrnambool-based Mentoring Support Officer Paul McCoy will call on his life experiences to help young apprentices and trainees through any tough times.

Paul comes to Westvic from a diverse working background, mostly notably 15 years in fisheries research for the Department of Primary Industries. He has also worked in hospitality, security, landscaping and construction, and most recently led a conservation and land management course under the National Green Jobs Corps program on the Camperdown-Timboon rail trail.

Paul will visit apprentices and trainees and help them sort out any problems. "We look at all types of issues, from payment, problems at trade school or even personal stuff," he said.

"Often it is the simple things that cause a problem. We're not counsellors but we can point them in the right direction to get some help."

The role is proving successful with Westvic continuing to retain apprentices and trainees at a rate well above national averages.

Paul is enjoying his new role, particularly the diverse range of skill shortage trades he works with. "I'm out and about all the time, which is good. I get to deal with a diverse range of trades from aeronautics to hospitality."

The appointment was made as part of the Federal Government's Kickstart program.

## New Focus For Foundation

The Westvic Foundation is taking a fresh approach in 2011 with a focus on projects that promote health, wellbeing and safety.

This year the Foundation will again distribute more than \$100,000 to schools and not-for-profit community groups but has adopted a broader outlook on the types of projects that will be considered.

In previous years the Foundation has assisted mainly schools to support students in the development of skills that enhance their employability.

While schools can still be involved, this year Westvic is also encouraging other community groups to apply for support.

CEO Miles Coverdale said that over the past year Westvic had instigated a special focus on responsible drinking awareness with its 'Know Your Limits' campaign and would favourably consider projects or sponsorship requests aligned with this focus.

Campaigns designed to raise awareness of drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, suicide prevention and healthy lifestyles will be high on the agenda of the Foundation's allocations.

Applications from emergency service organisations and sporting clubs will be considered along with those of not-for-profit community organisations and registered schools. The Foundation will also offer eight personal scholarships to young apprentices and trainees to support them with their career development and education. It will continue to cover the training fees of school based apprentices who are employed through the group training arm of Westvic Staffing Solutions and will also provide financial assistance to host employers providing training places for school based apprentices. The Foundation will also provide VET excellence awards to 25 secondary school students across the region.

Applications close on October 14 and the successful applicants will be announced at the Westvic awards night on November 4 in Warrnambool.

## Awards Night

Westvic's best apprentices and trainees will be recognised at the annual awards night on November 4 in Warrnambool.

The presentation will be at the City Memorial Bowls Club from 6.30pm.

Awards will be presented for the Apprentice of the Year, Trainee of the Year and Australian School Based Apprentice of the Year.

## ABSA Leads to Job

An Australian School Based Apprenticeship (ASBA) has paid off for Jordan Fish.

After completing his two-year ASBA Jordan has secured a full-time job as an apprentice plumber, co-hosted between Phil Kerr Plumbing and Sam Pickford Plumbing in Warrnambool.

It is a good outcome for Jordan who has been keen to pursue a career in the trades.

"I started the school apprenticeship at the start of year 11 in 2009," he said. "I wanted a trade and thought plumbing would be good."

Two days per week of practical experience mixed with block release at trade school ensured Jordan was well prepared for his role and he is fitting in nicely with his hosts. Now working as a second year apprentice, Jordan continues to enjoy his work. "It's good; I'm learning something new every day."

He has also enjoyed the support offered by Westvic in facilitating his placement.



## Service Expands

Westvic's Apprentice Centre has expanded in Hamilton and Portland and is now offering a regular weekly consulting service.

Training Contract Consultant Paul Frusher is now based in Hamilton every Wednesday while consultant David Ryan is in Portland every Thursday. Paul and David can assist employers, apprentices and trainees with free, confidential advice on training, apprenticeships and traineeships, recruitment, and government incentives.

Previously consultants visited the area on an as-needed basis. The permanent arrangement will build stronger relationships with employers in Hamilton and Portland and improve outcomes for trainees and apprentices.

Colac is also enjoying an expanded Apprentice Centre service with the appointment of Frank Park as a full-time Colac-based Training Contract Consultant.

## It's a Record

Westvic has placed a record number of people into apprenticeships and traineeships over the past 12 months.

The 2010-11 annual report shows 1461 apprentice and trainee registrations were recorded for the year, including many in skill shortage areas.

The number surpassed last year's total of just over 1300 registrations.

CEO Miles Coverdale said 430 of the registrations were made through the Federal Government's Kickstart program where employers who took on an apprentice under age 20 in a skill shortage trade gained additional incentives.

There was also an increase in School Based Apprentices during the year.

The record figure was one of many highlights of 2010-11 for Westvic which also reported expansion of training programs, improved integration of services, meeting budget targets and a sound financial position.

## Ron Breaks the Ice

Ron Clark should feel like a thorn among the roses but instead he feels right at home as the sole male member of Westvic's Job Services Australia team in Portland.

Ron is the first man to work in the JSA Portland team and while he says the "male talk" of his previous careers in car sales and hardware has evaporated, the workplace is still fun.

The new Employment Consultant has spent the first few weeks of his job familiarising himself with the position.

"My work in the past has mostly been in retail so this is a big step in a new direction for me," Ron said. "It was the next step up for me and an interesting challenge," he added.

"I'm still learning the ropes but everyone has been very helpful."

Ron's role is to help people looking for employment to become

'work ready'. "We help out with any issues they might have and set people up with training and further education when it's needed," he said.

Ron, who lives in Portland with his partner and three children, said he was pleased to bring a male perspective to the JSA team. "There are males in other offices but not in Portland for some reason, but really it makes no difference."



## Board Moves



Westvic has a new board chairman and board member. Henry Bongers has officially taken on the chairman's role after acting in the position for several months when he replaced former chairman Stephanie Wilkie who resigned to move to Western Australia. Henry is a principal of commercial building firm BDH Constructions and a strong advocate of Westvic's services.



Hamilton real estate agent Helen Morrison has joined the board. A former teacher, Helen has always maintained a strong interest in education and through her role as chairman of the former Area Consultative Committee had a close relationship with government departments and the broader workforce.

Describing herself as community-minded, Helen said she was keen to play a role on the board as it continues to improve and develop Westvic.

She replaces Stephanie Wilkie as the Hamilton region representative on the Westvic Board.



*Westvic staff who have recently clocked up 10 years of service to the organisation were honoured at the recent AGM. They included Andrea Best, Brooke Hammersley, Kelly Crothers, Denise Dalton, Rosemary Taffs and Veronica MacLean.*

## Training Expands

The success of Westvic's first diploma course will lead to more courses in 2012. More than 40 people are benefitting from the inaugural Diploma of Business course which has exceeded expectations and is helping people in their professional development.

RTO Operations Manager Steve Hoy said feedback had been extremely positive.

The course covers topics such as managing meetings, workforce planning, recruitment selection and induction processes, personal development, marketing opportunities, project management and risk management.

Next year three diploma courses will be offered, with new courses in Human Resources Management and Management added to the RTO's scope.

"Overall enrolment is up and the demand for courses is increasing and we will be expanding our program to meet those needs," Steve said.

A full course guide for 2012 will be released during October.

Westvic has also adopted more flexible training options for JSA clients.

Weekly workshops are being offered in Hamilton and Portland to assist business and retail clients with their entry-level courses. One-on-one assistance and self-paced learning have made training easier to access and the purchase of 36 laptops has helped to improve IT skills and add to flexibility. Online training is becoming a popular option but students are happy to know Westvic staff are there to help when needed.

The independent nature of the training has helped clients to stick with their training which gives them a good foundation for employment.

### Warrnambool

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### Hamilton

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### Colac

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### Portland

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03 5521 0700

### Westvic Staffing Solutions Apprentice Centre

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