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TRAINING MAKES RENEE'S FUTURE MECHANICALLY SOUND

A mature-aged apprentice is breaking new ground in one of the country's key areas of skills shortage.

Renee Arnold, a 35 year old diesel mechanic from Broken Hill, is a prime example of the benefits of up-skilling taking advantage of the careers available in the resources industry. She is employed by Career Employment G (CEG), and her host employer is South Australian Caterpillar dealer and service provider, Cavpower.

Renee has trodden a well-known path for many young people – she tried to enter a trade when she left school was not accepted, so she moved into unskilled labour, before retraining and excelling as a mature-aged apprentice.

A former production line employee at an automotive parts plant in Adelaide, Renee was made redundant following the closure of the Mitsubishi plants. With a strong interest in mechanics, but no prior mechanical training, Renee took an opportunity to begin an apprenticeship following a recruitment drive to find more workers for the South Australian mining industry.

She said undertaking her apprenticeship has given her an enormous sense of self-worth and satisfaction, however, it hasn't been without some challenges.

Renee said it took some time to adjust from working in a production line to undertaking an apprenticeship.

"It was a bit of a culture shock. After working in a factory for such a long time, I really had to switch my brain on and get back into learning mode after 15 years of not having to worry."

Renee is also a mature-aged apprentice working in a male-dominated trade. In fact, she was the first female diesel mechanic employed by Cavpower, and has carved a path for another young female diesel mechanic recently hired by the organisation.

"I think you are listened to more as a female in a male environment. You stand out, and are often scrutinized more than the younger male apprentices. But I've not encountered any negativity at all.

"As a mature-aged apprentice, you are there because you want to be. You have made a decision, and weighed all the odds, and you are more inclined to want to learn."

Renee is going into her fourth year as an apprentice and has now been transferred to Cavpower's Broken Hill branch, which is in her home town. She will complete her studies in 2012.

"Now that I am moving into my fourth year, I am being given more responsibility and working on bigger jobs. It's very satisfying."

CEG says that Renee is one of its top apprentices, and an inspiration to other mature-aged apprentices and females considering working in youth-orientated or male dominated traditional trades.

Group Training Australia: www.grouptraining.com.au