

IPC Speech for 1300apprentice – Meagan Thorpe

Good ~~morning~~<sup>afternoon</sup> everyone. My name is Meagan Thorpe, I am the Area Manager for 1300apprentice, and today I am speaking on behalf of 1300apprentice – a registered Group Training Organisation – which proudly manages the Hume Coal Apprenticeship Program.

We support the Hume Coal Project and Berrima Rail Project, and we employ residents of the Wingecarribee community in a wide variety of apprenticeships and traineeships in businesses located within the Wingecarribee region. We are a for-purpose organisation with over 30 years of experience in the Vocational Education & Training industry.

Our reputable, professional and approachable team has an in-depth knowledge of the Vocational Education and Training industry, ensuring a quality of service which is at the centre of our operation and ethos. Guided by a commitment to career development through on and off-the-job training, 1300apprentice works closely with local businesses and client partners to achieve vocational excellence and local career opportunities.

1300apprentice are an equal opportunity employer, providing opportunities for;

- women in non-traditional trades,
- indigenous people,
- mature aged people,
- refugees,
- school-based students,
- and people with a disability.

Our organisation along with many others in the area, including host employers that take on the apprentices and trainees through the Hume Coal Apprenticeship Program, have already benefited greatly from Hume Coal's community investment program and their support.

Opportunities have been created for many of the trainees and apprentices that would not have been possible without the financial support of Hume Coal.

We see the value that this opportunity provides to the Wingecarribee community (which we work very closely with), and we are proud to be involved in it.

Prior to being employed by 1300apprentice in 2011, I have been employed by another Group Training Organisation, as well as a Registered Training Organisation, an Australian Apprenticeship Centre and a Job Services Australia provider.

Since the beginning of my career in 1991 I have also been employed in the industries of hospitality, horticulture, plumbing, business, and warehousing.

I am a qualified trainer, with additional training in Mental Health First Aid, Cultural Awareness, Language Literacy and Numeracy, Mentoring in the Workplace, and Work Health and Safety.

I have completed 2 traineeships in the earlier stages of my career in both Hospitality and Business Sales.

These experiences have given me valuable skills to be able to source, employ, guide, support, and mentor the apprentices and trainees we employ, as well as to partner with, and support our host employers, industry, and sponsors.

This is what I am passionate about and will continue to pursue in my career.

The aim of the Hume Coal apprenticeship program is to provide entry level skilled jobs as well as up-skilling opportunities for people in the Southern Highlands who are looking for full time work opportunities with local businesses.

This program has been the first of its kind where a company has paid for all employee costs (incl. wages, travel and tools) with no obligation for the trainee or apprentice to work for, or promote Hume Coal.

1300 apprentice has worked closely with the Hume Coal project for close to 5 years. During this time 24 apprentices and trainees have had the opportunity to go through the Hume Coal Apprenticeship Program, working in local businesses - in the community - for the community.

Since 2015, \$250,000 each year has been funding the Hume Coal Apprenticeship program. That'll be close to \$1.25 million dollars by the end of this year, purely invested back into the local community *[and this doesn't include the funding that has been provided by the Hume Coal Charitable Foundation and Sponsorship Program]*.

The types of local businesses that have hosted or currently host apprentices and trainees include:

- Electrical,
- Carpentry,
- Landscaping and Garden Maintenance,
- Heavy Commercial Vehicle,
- Engineering,
- Signage,
- Accounting,

- Hospitals (for both animals and people),
- A Registered Training Organisation and,
- Early Childhood Education Services.

All of which are fundamental to the local business community.

Without the funding from the Hume Coal Apprenticeship Program, many of our now qualified Apprentices and Trainees would not be where they are today.

As part of the Hume Coal Apprenticeship Program, 1300 apprentice have employed;

- Apprentices who had to travel to Sydney based businesses, back to remain in the local community where they reside.
- Mature aged people to kick start their dream career,
- Local teenagers that were unable to secure their career of choice,
- A female apprentice in a non-traditional trade,
- An indigenous trainee with a goal to be an accountant,
- As well as taking on apprentices who have lost their jobs due to a shortage of work, poor working conditions, or not being the right fit in their workplace.

All of these apprentices and trainees gain a nationally recognised qualification as part of their employment.

All of the trainees and apprentices that have completed to date. have either stayed on with the business they completed their apprenticeship with, or have secured other employment opportunities, or have gone on to study at university at the end of their traineeship or apprenticeship.

Some of the apprentices have plans or are in progress to starting their own business in the future.

Unfortunately, many communities see their young people leave the area when they finish high school because of the lack of local work and opportunity.

If the project were to be approved and continue, programs like the one I manage could expand and help keep youth, young adults and other eligible participants in the area by giving them real skills, and a pathway to transition into long term careers via apprenticeships and traineeships.

I have seen first-hand, the benefits of the Hume Coal Apprenticeship Program for both the host employer, AND the trainees and apprentices who have secured work and have attained, or are attaining beneficial skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications to enhance not only their careers, but also their life.

Based on my first-hand experience in this project, the value of what Hume Coal has, and is providing to the local community is life changing.

The program has allowed locals to work with local businesses, remaining near their friends and families, and in turn, contributing significantly to the skill base and economy of the Southern Highlands.

We are proud to support the Hume Coal project and Berrima Rail Project.

Thank you.