



Apprentices and young tradies face off in WorldSkills eliminations

At this year's Austral Bricks HIA Spring Home Show you'll be able to watch some of the state's top youth face off in the Skillsquest Zone for a spot representing WA in the national WorldSkills competition.

This zone will hold eliminations over Saturday and Sunday of the show. Most of the competitions running are WorldSkills, however some additional Skillsquest competitions will be included for the first time.

Some of the categories on display at the home show include joinery, carpentry, bricklaying, wall and floor tiling, construction, glazing, floor covering and solid plastering.

WA coordinator for WorldSkills Frank Everingham says WorldSkills is like an Olympics for apprentices. "They will be vying to win a place in Team WA to contest the national competition in Brisbane next May and winners there may have the chance to compete in the international competition in London the following year," he says.

"We'll field a team of around 50 to represent WA next year. Australia will then field a team of between 20-to-30 Skillaroos who will take on the best of the rest of the world in London.

"It's a challenge for apprentices, their employers and trainers to become the best in their fields. They test themselves against the best and see if they can become a leader in their field. They'll all learn from their WorldSkills experience and gain worthy skills."

The Department of Education and Training sent letters and application forms to apprentices and employers direct for the 2009 WA WorldSkills cycle. Competitors this year need to be born on or after January 1, 1986 to

be eligible for the open competitions. WorldSkills also offers school students studying in their first year of a vocational training program a chance to compete through their VET in schools program.

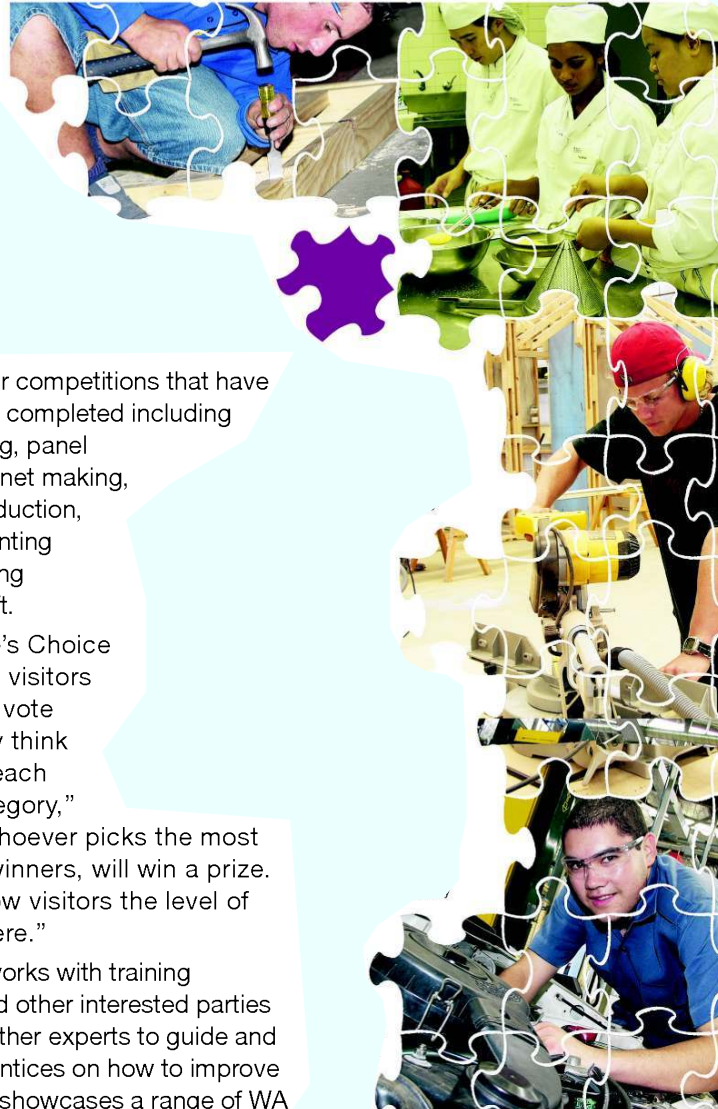
"Apprentices and young tradies can enter themselves but the number of applications received are far greater than the number we can accommodate in the state finals so we run a series of skill-offs to get the numbers down to the best in any category," Frank says.

Competition results won't be announced until after the home show has finished. "One of the highlights is at 1:30pm on the Sunday when the bricklayers will be involved in a speed test. Fourteen guys will compete to build a brick pier as high as they can in half an hour and by the end of it they'll be jumping to put the last brick on," he says. "This is the only element of the competitions where we'll know the outcome on the day."

Judges are all industry leaders and give wonderful feedback and advice. Most projects are eight hours in length but in Brisbane next year, the competitions take three days.

The Australian Skillaroos Team just came back from Calgary in Canada where two Western Australians, Stacey Pitman and Michael Welshman, competed. Australia is currently placed fifth in the world for WorldSkills.

The Skillsquest zone will also include a People's Choice Award area over the



three days for competitions that have already been completed including spray painting, panel beating, cabinet making, garment production, jewellery, painting and decorating and sign craft.

“The People’s Choice Award gives visitors a chance to vote for who they think won out of each specific category,” he says. “Whoever picks the most number of winners, will win a prize. This will show visitors the level of skills out there.”

Skillsquest works with training providers and other interested parties to bring together experts to guide and advise apprentices on how to improve their skills. It showcases a range of WA WorldSkills competitions and allows some of the budding and talented youth to display their skills.

WorldSkills has over 50 categories in building and construction, hospitality and food, metals and engineering, electrotechnology, automotive, retail and personal, light manufacturing, computing and business and VET in schools.

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