



# Young tradies to showcase skills to world

Cara Jenkin

**T**HIRTY of the state's best young tradies are gearing up to measure their skills against the best in the nation and represent Australia overseas in the WorldSkills competition.

The competition showcases and measures the skills and expertise young people aged 23 and under have in trades.

Tradies compete against each other in completing everyday tasks in tight time frames.

More than 250 tradies competed in the state's regional competition held in the second half of last year and the winners earned a place in the national competition to be held in Brisbane in May.

Categories ranged from heavy vehicle mechanics and sheet metal to hospitality and beauty care.

Third-year mechanical fitting apprentice Lee Thiele, 21, won three medals in the state championships late last year – a gold medal in both the CAD Mechanical and Fitting categories and a silver medal for the Fluid Power category.

The Master Builders Group Training Scheme apprentice, hosted by glass manufacturer OI Industries, said WorldSkills had really helped him with his problem-solving abil-

ities. "WorldSkills is good to get your mind thinking about problems you might not get a chance to work on in your job," he said.

"At work you might have someone looking over your shoulder and helping you, but in the WorldSkills competitions you have to work it out for yourself, so it teaches you to be independent.

"The competitions put you under the pump and you're doing everything under really tight time frames so it's good to challenge yourself a bit." He said he had learned good work habits, such as working quickly and efficiently and he now had the confidence to do tasks without having to seek the guidance of other tradesmen in the workplace.

His employer Terry Gladwin said trade competitions such as WorldSkills Australia helped young workers rise to a new level and faster, more motivated staff was better for the business.

More than 30 of his employees at the Master Builders Group Training Scheme competed in last year's WorldSkills regional competition.

He said the competition, known among industries as the "Trade Olympics", helped to raise the profile of the trades and provided good

recognition for his organisation.

"We encourage all of our apprentices to participate in WorldSkills because we find it expands their range of skills, instils a sense of pride in their trade and teaches them to be more self-sufficient in their work," he said. "To be able to put on their resume that they won a WorldSkills medal really boosts their attractiveness to employers."

Regional WorldSkills competitions are run every two years in South Australia and have received strong support from the training sector as well as industries.

Competitors from South Australia in each of the 30 trade categories will compete at the national competition. Each has been assigned a mentor, such as a previous national competitor or a judge, to work with them so they can achieve their best at the competition.

National winners will have the chance to represent Australia at the 41st International WorldSkills competition in London in 2011.

Recruiting will get underway later this year for the South Australian regional competition which will be held in 2011.



**GEARING UP:** OI Industries mechanical fitting apprentice Lee Thiele, who won two gold and a silver medal at the recent WorldSkills "Olympics for tradies". Picture: **ALICE PROKOPEC**