



Succeeding in a male dominated industry

By SHELLEY SPENCER

RHEANNA Chenhall may only be 18, but she is certainly making her mark on a male dominated industry in her second year as a builder's apprentice.

Being on a site with seven men doesn't faze Ms Chenhall and she encourages other females to follow her lead, as there are lots of opportunities and work available.

"As long as you know how to take a joke and have a laugh it's great, I get treated equally and there's no conflict," Ms Chenhall said.

Ms Chenhall is working at OneSteel in Youngtown. Site foreman Phil Berwick is pleased with her effort and doesn't distinguish between her and the men.

"I'm happy to have her as one of the team, she's adapted well in a man's world and is one of the guys," Mr Berwick said.

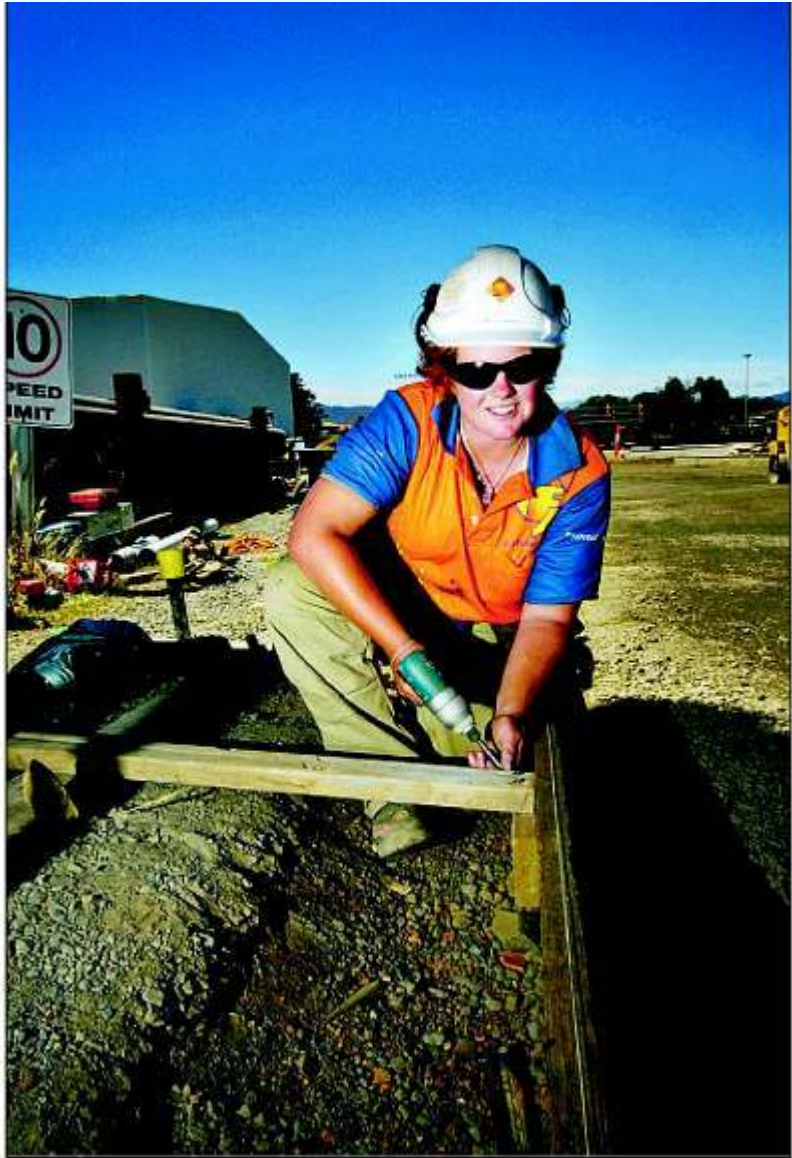
"As a worker she's as good as anyone else, she's just as skilful and gets no special treatment. We are all equal."

After studying architecture at college Ms Chenhall decided that a career in construction would be more suitable.

"I contacted Fairbrother and they told me to do a VET course at Launceston College, so I did and studied theory on the basics of construction," Ms Chenhall said.

Every Thursday night she also attended classes at TAFE, learning skills like sharpening chisels.

Twelve months later she was employed by Fairbrother and has



Second-year apprentice Rheanna Chenhall, of Newnham, at work for OneSteel.

continued to go from strength to strength.

While at Launceston College, the teenager from Newnham was nominated to go to the world skills competition in Hobart for the Regional Championships.

After beating 20 other competitors, Ms Chenhall won a place at the nationals in Melbourne, where she took the gold medal in the individual

event and bronze in the team's event.

"We had to build a wall frame and put a door jamb on and based on the efficiency of how we did it is what we were judged on," Ms Chenhall said.

After completing her four-year apprenticeship, Ms Chenhall hopes to gain a few years' further experience and then start her own company.