



More women needed in trades

By Ben Hyde

WOMEN will be targeted to take up trades under a new strategy to prevent a skills shortage in the south.

A working group has been set up to highlight career opportunities for young women in traditionally male dominated fields, including carpentry, plumbing and engineering.

"They need to know that a career in a trade is not as scary as they think," group facilitator **Darlene Voss**, from the Australian Technical College, says.

"We want to break down the barriers. Women in trades are an untapped resource."

The group is made up of representatives from the ATC, training organisations, businesses and government organisations. Members will visit schools to speak to students about career opportunities.

They will also run displays at the Careers and Employment Expo in May, with the sole purpose to attract more women into trades.

The number of women starting apprenticeships in South Australia has increased from 533 in 2004 to 641 last year.

Mrs Voss says the group is aiming for a 15 per cent increase in the number of women engaged in trades by the end of next year to help address the looming skills shortage in the south. Almost 32,000 older workers are predicted to retire in the Onkaparinga and Marion council districts over the next decade and the region could need up to 19,000 additional workers by 2017-18 due to opportunities stimulated by major projects.

Larissa Purdie, 16, of Seaford, is an example of what the work-

ing group is hoping to achieve.

She is completing an automotive Australian School-based Apprenticeship (ASbA) at the Australian Technical College at Christies Beach and hopes to become a light vehicle mechanic. Larissa is the lone female attending the Australian Technical College and while she admits it was daunting to begin with, she says she now enjoys it.

"On the first day I didn't want to get out of mum's car - I enjoy everything now.

"Everyone is always there to help."

Larissa says a mentor program the college established for her was very beneficial.

She is looking forward to playing a similar mentoring role for three new girls enrolled to start at the college in 2009.



BUDDING MECHANIC: Seaford's Larissa Purdie is enjoying her job at Southgate Service Centre as more women are being encouraged to enter male dominated trades. Picture: Helen Orr 21528s