

# Spark of inspiration

by Jenkin  
CareerOne Editor

Y Borlace and Doug Brook are looking at bright futures after excelling in their trade early in their careers.

The two "sparkies" encourage other young people to take up apprenticeships but suggest doing research to ensure it is the right career to take.

The tradesmen have been recognised through Group Training Australia's South Australian Group Training Awards.

Group Training organisations either employ about 4000 apprentices and trainees in many industries including electrical, engineering, hospitality and horticulture.

Mr Brook, 18, now a second-year electrical apprentice at United Electric, was awarded the 2009 Australian School-based Apprentice of the Year.

He left high school at the end of year 10 to study at the technical college at Christie Downs, now called Marcellin Technical College, where he began his apprenticeship while still at school.

His interest in electrics was sparked during electronics classes in year 9 and 10, and he felt the technical college could give him the hands-on learning in a variety of technical subjects.

He also found technical studies more relevant to his future than other high school subjects, such as science and drama.

"I classify myself as a big thinker with electrical, a lot is a thinking process," he said.

"I'm on the maintenance side, so I'm thinking on my feet, thinking through problems that arise. There's so much diversity and so much to learn."

Mr Brook was one of three apprentices to pass all his tests during the first year of his school-based apprenticeship, which led to his Group Training Award. He encouraged other students who did not feel school



**RIGHT CHOICE:** Young achievers, school-based apprentice of the year Doug Brook, 18, and apprentice of the year Ty Borlace, 24. Pictures, cover and above: NIGEL PARSONS

was for them and were interested in an apprenticeship to do their research and find out what options were available to them.

"If it's for them, they can always give it a shot," he said. "In the first year it's about having a look at what it's all about. There's a probationary period of three to six months and you can decide that 'it's for me' and follow through with a career, or not."

Mr Borlace, 24, now in his first year as a qualified electrician at SAGE Automation, was awarded 2009 Apprentice of the Year.

He took a much different path to Mr Brook and came into the trade a year after he finished high school.

He said he felt pressured at school to study at university and did not realise until afterwards that it was

not the right career path for him. "I made a couple of bad decisions at school," he said.

"It was suggested with my grades, I should do chemistry.

"But I came out of school and realised there were very few career prospects for it, the pay is not that good and there is quite a lot of study."

He took a year off after high school to decide what to pursue and a chance meeting with an electrician sparked his interest in the trade.

He completed a six-month pre-vocational course at TAFE, doing work experience at Mitsubishi, where he realised his passion lay in industrial, rather than domestic, electrical work.

Not having to deal with customers

was one of the reasons why he preferred industrial work, he said.

"You not only use your hands, you use your brain as much as in any other career," he said. "There's lots of thinking - how am I going to do this? Why isn't it working?"

He said it was good to earn cash while completing his training and found he earned about the same as friends who worked part-time while studying full-time at university. But he did not have the stress of juggling both and did not have a HECS debt at the end of his training.

"My advice to anyone starting out is to do your research," he said.

"Like uni wasn't for me, I'm sure apprenticeships aren't for everyone.

"Find what you're good at and stick with it."