

Girls earning early-career advantages in high school

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A RECORD number of southern suburbs female students are kickstarting their careers through vocational secondary education by pursuing technical trades in high school.

Marcellin Technical College this year has 25 female students learning trades, almost three times as many as the nine female students who enrolled last year.

Just three female students enrolled at the college in 2009.

The Christies Downs school aims to provide training programs which meet local demands for skills to Year 11 and 12 students.

It also allows students to gain their high school qualification, SACE, nationally accredited training up to a certificate III in their desired vocation and help them to obtain an apprenticeship or traineeship with a local employer.

The high school and vocational qualifications combined give students an edge over other school leavers in the job market as well as a head start towards becoming a qualified tradesperson.

The college actively seeks female students who want to take up trades, such as construction, cabinet making, electrotechnology, automotive and metal fabrication.

But it also offers students training in viticulture, animal studies and commercial cookery.

College principal Jim Fenoughty says the college wants to be able

THE SKILLS

Technical colleges provide Year 11 and 12 students with their SACE as well as a start towards an apprenticeship or traineeship in:

- Electrotechnology
- Construction
- Cabinet making
- Engineering
- Metal fabrication
- Automotive
- Animal studies
- Commercial cookery
- Viticulture

to provide a workforce to fill job vacancies in the southern suburbs and is particularly keen to fill any void in education and training opportunities available in the region.

"We take great pride in doing what we can to address the local skills shortage," he says. "Our strategy is to develop and position our courses to meet demand."

He says it is important to address the gender balance on campus and working in trades but an increase in the number of female students also benefited other students.

"Females can be great role models on campus with their attention to academic detail," he says.

"In addition to education and social aspects of gender difference in the student body at the college, one of our goals is to promote trade qualifications among females."



Abigail Richards – with her ferret, Fay – and Abbey Suckling are among the increasing number of female students at Marcellin Technical College. **Picture: Nigel Parsons**

SACE Stage I electrotechnology student Abbey Suckling says she always had an interest in the field but decided to go for it as a career after learning more about the college and job opportunities at a careers expo.

"I have never been concerned that Marcellin would be filled with boys," she says.

"Guys are great to hang out with and will look out for you as much as any other girlfriend/best friend would."

"I think we are old enough and mature enough and all eager to get into the workforce and help each other out."

"I am so happy with the choice..."

"(I) have now been working in my apprenticeship for three months after getting the offer during my first work placement."

SACE Stage II animal studies student Abigail Richards says studying at the college gives her the opportunity for a headstart on her career dream to work with animals.

"Marcellin Technical College gave me opportunity to complete my SACE and gain Certificate II in Animal Studies that leads to career I always dreamt of," she says.

"I found it really easy to fit in and make new friends..."

"You are able to concentrate more on your work than your social life here."