

SKILLS EXCELLENCE - TAKING OUR BEST TO THE WORLD

An evidence-based conversation
about the impact of WorldSkills
Australia on Skills Excellence



Acknowledgement of Country

WorldSkills Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all competitors, trainers, experts, and judges who made the Internationals come alive for WorldSkills Australia around the world, for taking the time to provide their thoughts, opinions, and feedback to support continuous improvement in our drive to raise the profile of Skills Excellence for the benefit of Australian youth.



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As a social enterprise, at the heart of all we do, is the ethos of giving back to contribute towards building a stronger community. We, at WorldSkills Australia, take great pride in being a part of the global skills development ecosystem. Strategically, we see great importance in influencing the Australian skills sector by bringing back learnings from competing on the global stage to enable benchmarking in the Australia skills development sector.

Our Impact project was launched with the aim to capture and quantify our value proposition, the influences we have on Australia's skills development environment. Commenced with gathering key evidence from the 2021 National Championships. Now, we continue the journey with those that participated in our National Championships 2021 to gain further evidence progressively. This time, we seek to showcase the extent of our impact of being the Australian representative of the WorldSkills International community to support our youth to compete in their Skills categories on the world stage.

Our Skillaroos, have excelled at the regional and national levels and have demonstrated the qualities to continue their development and excel in a competitive environment. Skill Experts, who have trained and mentored the Skillaroos accompany them and are collectively known as Team Australia, represent Australia in an event that is best described as "Olympics for Skills." The results in addition or significantly more than the coveted, Gold, Silver, Bronze, or Medallion of Excellence, are exponential personal growth, increased technical knowledge, additional methodologies to employ, global networks and changed ambitions, all of which meaningfully and positively add to the Australian skills sector.

Going forward, it is our strong desire to increase the number of skills that we participate in on the global stage, allowing benchmarking and integral learnings to be brought back to Australia, to develop the future skill leaders who will be successful in shaping the future of Australia.

Through this report we provide insights from our Skillaroos and our experts who participated in the WorldSkills International Competitions - Special Edition 2022. It is through their voices we truly quantify the impacts our organisation has on the individual and the collective.

We thank all those who participated actively in giving feedback to feed this research activity. We look forward to supporting all of you further in your personal and professional development journeys as integral members of the WorldSkills Australia community.

We look forward to working even more closely together with key players in the ecosystem across education, industry, and government to produce greater outcomes for our youth. Let's, together, continue to amplify the skills excellence conversation to keep our society and economy growing.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Trevor Schwenke
Chief Executive Officer
WorldSkills Australia

The survey had 31 participants representing 2 respondent groups, with a 100% response rate. It has been established through ongoing research that competitors gain immense value on multiple fronts through their engagement with WorldSkills Australia.

Previous reports have quantified the extent of the positive impacts our programs have on those who actively engage with us. This report focuses on the impact that is made on those who have trained and represented Australia on the global stage, benchmarking their skills and those of the Australian skills sector and continues to be outstandingly and overwhelmingly positive:

86.7% of respondents attributed their motivation to finishing their current education to their involvement in WorldSkills Australia

80% said that competing has taught them to perform well under pressure, that they have developed greater decision-making skills, greater networking skills and skills in problem solving under pressure

100% said that the international experience has not only helped them to further improve their skills, but also to develop new skills

93% of respondents validated that being involved with WorldSkills Australia supported improvement in their application of skills in the workplace

86.6% reiterate that it has given them access to a larger network of peers and mentors and has inspired them to aim higher in life and work

80% say that it has motivated them to make sure they attain their qualifications, inspired them to progress their careers in their chosen Skills and made them think more about what they wish to achieve in their careers such as start a small business, teach others and more

All Experts have reiterated that they enjoy providing value to competitors and peers through the WorldSkills Australia programs and indeed, being part of the WorldSkills community:

86.7% said that being involved with WorldSkills Australia has supported improvement in their Teaching and Professional Practice

81.3% said they developed mentoring skills and gained leadership Skills

68.8% said they got better at critical thinking and evaluation, decision-making, negotiating and communicating overall and gained skills in creating a high-performance training environment

Though the statistics paint an undeniable picture, it is also clear from each participant's feedback, participating in the WorldSkills International competitions provides further life-changing value on many fronts, with this value setting the stage for new and greater life and career achievements to come.

Competing as a team and interacting with global peers has indeed, changed perspectives on what's possible for themselves and others around them. Survey results paint a solid picture of passion, amplified energy and enthusiasm, contribution, strong sense of purpose and achievement and strong engagement.

In line with WorldSkills Australia's strategic objectives 2021/2022, WorldSkills Australia has set out to measure and evaluate business performance with clear focus on:

- Deriving evidence of core value delivered to WorldSkills Australia customers and stakeholders
- Further understanding business strengths and areas of opportunity for future growth and sustainability
- Supporting key stakeholder partners in the skills ecosystem in their continuous improvement strategies to support and challenge our youth to realise their full potential; and
- Innovation

This report summarises key findings from on-line surveys conducted with WorldSkills Australia competitors and experts who participated at the WorldSkills International Competition 2022 Special Edition from September to November 2022, where the WorldSkills global network hosted skill competitions in a variety of countries and regions. Key focus of this report is to not only further validate data gathered through the Nationals 2021, but also look at incremental value gained by respondent groups in progressing from the Nationals to International Competitions on the global stage.

WorldSkills Australia intends to continue collecting data from regional, national and international competitions in coming months and years, which will add to WorldSkills Australia's growing database and enable comparison of results from one iteration to the next. This comparison will provide further inputs to analyse the efficacy of WorldSkills Australia's continuous improvement activities and new initiatives, while providing valuable feedback to others in the skills ecosystem.



Team Australia Recognition Event at Government House, July 2022

WorldSkills Australia commissioned Playmakers Consulting Services Pty Ltd (PCS) to conduct online surveys of its key customer/stakeholder groups.

WorldSkills Australia team participated in a workshop to confirm context, expectations, and key objectives derived previously when commissioning initial research to be gathered at the National Championships 2021. The data collected at the National Championships 2021 provided the baseline for further research. As the International competitions are the effective peak of the WorldSkills Australia journey for many, the parameters set in 2021 were sense-checked and course-corrected as necessary. Additional research questions were ratified to evaluate unique value and incremental value gained by this select group of respondents who had the opportunity to represent Australia on the global stage. Key stakeholders, as per previous iteration, were integrally involved in all aspects of the project, including design, development, and delivery.

Research purpose

As per the purpose of research conducted at the National Championships, the Internationals Survey sought to further validate the following:

How does WorldSkills Australia influence the education pathways and employment/career decisions of competitors?

- How does WorldSkills Australia influence employability skills' development of competitors?
- How does WorldSkills Australia inspire, influence, and enable competitors?
- How does WorldSkills Australia influence improvement in skills application in the workplace?
- How does WorldSkills Australia inspire, influence, and enable educators and careers advisors?
- How does WorldSkills Australia contribute to increase in expertise and capability of educators and their workplace practices with respect to delivery of training and assessments?

In addition, in this instance, key purpose was to determine the step-up from value gained through involvement in WorldSkills International Competitions through gaining information on the following:

- How does involvement in International competitions amplify the benefits gained by competitors and experts in their WorldSkills Australia journey leading up to the International competitions?
- How does involvement in International competitions support development of a High-Performance mindset?
- How does the experience in Internationals support benchmarking against International standards?
- How does this benchmarking support development of best-practice nationally?

Methodology

Research was conducted through on-line surveys deployed to two respondent groups—Competitors and Trainers/Experts as per below.

All desktop research conducted at the initiation of the Impact Project that supported deployment of targeted surveys to multiple respondent groups at National Championships 2021 was reviewed for continued validity. A shorter subset of valid questions was selected to be deployed to respondent groups along with new questions focussed on the International experience.

- Skillaroos—International Competitors, 2022
- International Experts

HOLISTIC AREAS EXPLORED (AS PER NATIONALS 2021)

Focus both on overall WorldSkills Australia experience and specifically Internationals.

- MOTIVATORS—IMPETUS FOR ENTRY/ENGAGEMENT
- EXPERIENCE UPON ENGAGEMENT
- BENEFITS APPLIED—DEMONSTRABLE SKILLS/BEHAVIOURS & THE VALUE YOU PROVIDE TO OTHERS
- BENCHMARKING
- BRAND AMBASSADORSHIP & YOUR VIEWS

Questions were designed to evaluate and validate assumptions, explore areas to gain new information, test and understand causal relations between actions and results to gain further insights. Specific questions to explore new and additional value gained through the International Competitions' experience were included.

Please note, survey findings further add to the baseline to:

- Establish causation to conduct regression analysis in future
- Establish driver, control, and dependent variables for analysis in the future
- Link actions to results—Provide predictive capability



Carl Balke, Expert & Tom Clancy, Competitor Refrigeration Skill

About WorldSkills International Competitions

WorldSkills International Competitions are considered the gold standard of skills excellence. They inspire young Competitors to reach new heights, helping them turn their passion into a profession. Founded in 1950, the Competition takes place every two years in a Member Country of WorldSkills International. 85 members of WorldSkills International connect two thirds of the world's population. Together WorldSkills International members inspire and support 100 million young people to get ahead with skills.

WorldSkills Australia is part of the international WorldSkills movement. Every two years WorldSkills Australia sends a highly trained team, the Skillaroos, to compete against 84 member countries for the title of the world's most skilled country at an International Competition. The selection of skills represented by Australia is determined by age eligibility of competitors, available funding and government and industry support, priority of the skill for the Australian skills sector and the success of past campaigns.

The Skills Squad emerge from the National Championships as Australia's best young skilled apprentices and trainees. From here the elite Skillaroos are selected, forming part of Team Australia that will go on to compete internationally.

WorldSkills Competition 2022 Special Edition was the official replacement for WorldSkills Shanghai 2022, cancelled in May due to the pandemic.

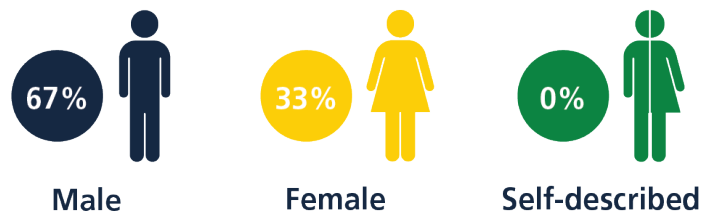
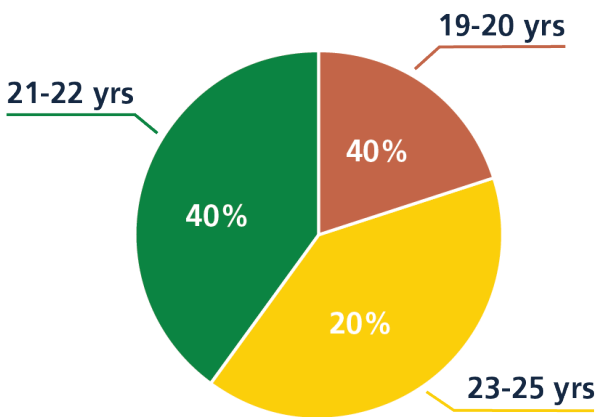
WorldSkills Competition 2022 Special Edition harnessed the expertise and resourcefulness of the WorldSkills global network to host the official skill competitions between September and November, with the global network coming together at locations ranging from national championships and industry expos to world-class industry venues, educational training institutions, and even shopping malls for the 46th WorldSkills Competition.

Over 1,000 Competitors from 58 countries and regions participated in 62 skill competitions. Official WorldSkills Medals were awarded to WorldSkills Champions.



The survey had 31 participants representing 2 respondent groups.

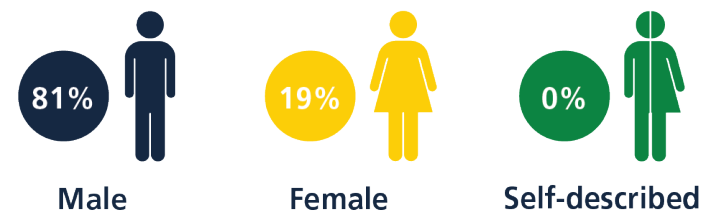
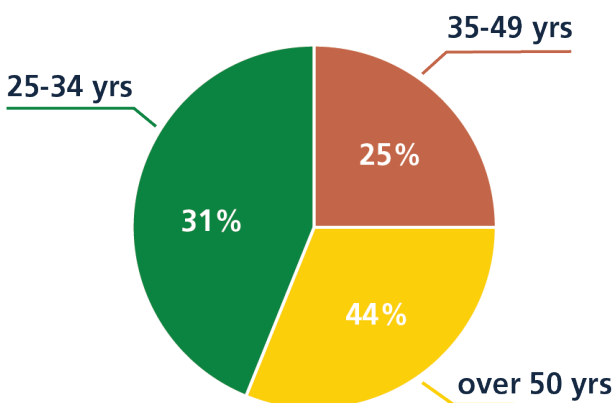
PROFILE OF COMPETITORS



1 out of 15 respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Total Respondents 15

PROFILE OF SKILLS PRACTITIONERS



0 out of 16 respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Total Respondents 16

14 Our value to the youth of Australia the voice of our Competitors

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN HIGH QUALITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Our focus is on increasing the:

- Number of young people more likely to consider technical skills employment pathways after participating at a WorldSkills Australia event
- Number of young people reporting a better knowledge and understanding (of their options) around technical routes and apprenticeships after participating in a WorldSkills Australia event
- Number of young people reporting raised aspirations after participating in a WorldSkills Australia event
- Number of female competitors in Australian Industry under-represented sectors participating at WorldSkills Australia regional, WorldSkills Australia national and/or WorldSkills Australia international events
- Number of Indigenous competitors participating at WorldSkills Australia regional, WorldSkills Australia national and/or WorldSkills International
- Number of WorldSkills Australia competitors citing improvement in career progression from competition experience
- Number of WorldSkills Australia competitors reporting improved technical skills following their participation at WorldSkills Australia regional, WorldSkills Australia national and/or WorldSkills International
- Number of WorldSkills Australia competitors reporting improved personal and employability skills at WorldSkills Australia regional, WorldSkills Australia national and/or WorldSkills International

Without application, there is only memory of a great experience. Application of value gained through demonstrable skills and behaviours unleashes WorldSkills Australia's mission and purpose through its stakeholder groups, truly making a difference in the lives of the youth of Australia, their families, their employers, and the economy as a whole.

Through this survey, we not only sought to gain feedback on engagement and experience in International competitions enabled by WorldSkills Australia, but also looked further into how this experience translates into real value in competitors' work and life.



What our Competitors said about value gained from their engagement and experience with WorldSkills Australia holistically: a snapshot

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT FOR WORLDSKILLS AUSTRALIA AGAIN

(As per Nationals survey 2021, reinforced in Regionals Survey 2022 and now further validated in Internationals Survey 2022)

86.7% of respondents attributed their motivation to finishing their current education to their involvement in WorldSkills Australia

From responses received, it is clear that the experience of engaging with WorldSkills Australia has given competitors strong intrinsic and extrinsic value. It is clear that the WorldSkills Australia experience supports our youth to not only gain greater technical skills, but also build key human skills essential for success in their careers and life, in general. Responses, indeed, continue to paint a story of inspiration.

Through participating in WorldSkills Australia competitions:

86.7% believed that they now have improved time management skills

80% said that competing has taught them to perform well under pressure, that they have developed greater decision-making skills, greater networking skills and skills in problem solving under pressure

73.3% said they gained self-management skills, developed resilience under pressure and multi-tasking ability

66.7% said they developed a winning mindset and learnt to take greater initiative.



Jewellery Competitors in Geneva Switzerland - Australian Competitor, Charles Farrar

What Competitors said about how the WorldSkills Australia experience has impacted/benefitted their workplace and employer

BENEFITS APPLIED—DEMONSTRABLE SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS

From anecdotal comments from Competitors, it is clear that preparation for WorldSkills competitions provides excellent training in both soft and technical skills which leads to improved productivity within participant workplaces and the confidence and conviction to apply for and gain more rewarding careers. The WorldSkills Australia forum provides the opportunity for participants to develop essential high-level skills in project management, problem solving, creativity and design, which are essential business skills for increased productivity, long term sustainability, and growth. Competitors have through their improved demonstrable skills gained from their WorldSkills experience raised their profile within their workplaces as knowledgeable, efficient changemakers bringing progressive practices into their workplace and to take their peers on the journey, thus enabling greater business outcomes. WorldSkills competitors are being actively utilised by their employers to develop individuals within their teams, particularly the apprentices and trainees, to support them in developing the future workforce in their industry.



93%

of respondents validated that being involved with WorldSkills Australia supported improvement in their application of skills in the workplace



Evidence shows that the opportunity lies in increasing youth participation in WorldSkills Australia which will simply, but surely lead to greater development opportunities and increased productivity in the workplace.

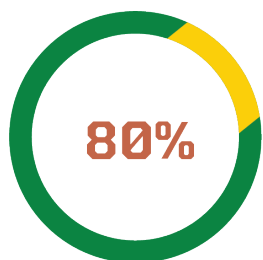


Anne Russell: International Competitor,
Hairdressing

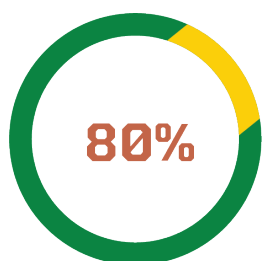


Nick McLaren: International Competitor,
Automobile Technology

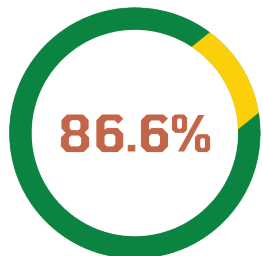
A SUMMARY OF WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN SKILLS SQUAD 2022 COMPETITORS SAID:



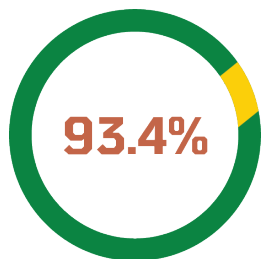
**Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Raises the profile of skills**



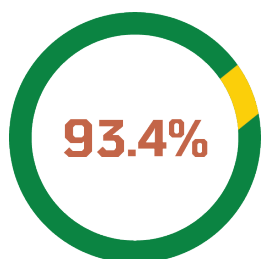
**Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Promotes Skills Excellence**



**Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Showcases skill-based employment pathways**



**Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Developes pride in skill-based occupations**



**Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Promotes greater efficiency and productivity in the
workforce through the ability to implement Skills
Excellence standards in the workplace**

Competitors: stepping up from National Championships to International Competitions

WHAT OUR COMPETITORS SAID ABOUT WHY THEY GOT INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS

MOTIVATORS: IMPETUS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Key Motivator Descriptors for choosing to compete in the International Competitions

It is clear from responses that respondents, having gained confidence through their WorldSkills Australia journey hitherto, chose to challenge themselves further by going into International Competitions to test their skills against competitors coming in from all over the world, considering it an imperative to represent Australia strongly.



Competitor motivation to compete was fuelled through many sources which include:

- Intrinsic motivation and drive to further challenge themselves and test own ability on a larger stage
- Desire to work with others across the world to learn and improve their own skills
- Benchmarking their skills against the rest of the world
- Wanting to represent their country proudly
- To be a pioneer by going into competitions in a new area that Australia has not competed in before
- Motivation and Advice from teachers
- Encouragement from employers
- Wanting to achieve even more to make family proud
- Interest in meeting new people and networking overseas
- Prospect of travelling overseas

Anecdotal comments from competitors (Australian Skills Squad 2022) on why they chose to compete in the WorldSkills International Competitions highlight that they were immeasurably proud to be representing Australia, to be part of high-performing team, testing Australia's skills against the those of the rest of the world. WorldSkills enabled new experiences for competitors, including international travel, which many would have not considered or prioritised as a means of developing their skills or furthering their careers. WorldSkills gave participants access to a world stage and the ability to learn from global champions and experts, to refine and perfect their expertise, and to gain access to global networks and build long term global relationships, providing ongoing benchmarking and development opportunities.

There is clear evidence that through enabling increase in the number of skills Australia competes in WorldSkills International Competitions, Australia's credibility, and recognition as a global leader in skills development will grow even further, opening a myriad of opportunities as a nation.

What Competitors said about how being involved in WorldSkills International Competitions has influenced them

EXPERIENCE UPON ENGAGEMENT

- 100%** said that the international experience has not only helped them to further improve their skills, but also to develop new skills
- 93.4%** say that it has inspired them to strive for excellence in their chosen Skill, given them more confidence in their won skills and furthermore, it has inspired them to help others choose skills pathways
- 86.6%** reiterate that it has given them access to a larger network of peers and mentors and has inspired them to aim higher in life and work
- 80%** say that it has motivated them to make sure they attain their qualifications, inspired them to progress their careers in their chosen Skills and made them think more about what they wish to achieve in their careers such as start a small business, teach others and more

STEP-UP IN APPLICATION OF SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE

A whopping **93%** of respondents have validated that simply being involved with WorldSkills Australia supported improvement in their application of skills in the workplace.

It is now clear from responses that the WorldSkills International experience has further augmented application of skills in the workplace in numerous ways as expressed eloquently through the voice of the Australian Skillaroos 2022. Anecdotal comments about how the WorldSkills International experience has further supported application of skills in the workplace show that the WorldSkills competition experience has enabled competitors to access state of the art equipment not readily available to them in their places of work. Participants have brought this new, enhanced knowledge and benefits of advanced technology back to their workplaces for increased productivity, improved precision and quality and enhanced customer service.

Respondent comments show that there exists a clear opportunity, through greater youth participation in WorldSkills agenda, to create a new breed of skilled, creative changemakers who can collaborate to support their businesses to think outside the box on delivering more and better through increasing workplace efficiency and productivity. Competitors, armed with new knowledge and skills can bring in new tools, techniques and potentially incorporate latest technology for the benefit of their customers, the workforce and ultimately grow the business as a whole.



STEP-UP IN INFLUENCING CAREER JOURNEYS

WSA involvement supporting Career progression and opening up Career/Life options

From the data gathered in the Nationals 2021 survey, it was clear that not only has the WorldSkills Australia experience influenced competitors to do more, do better and do different in their workplaces and life in general, the demonstration of this strong achievement and continuous improvement orientation has clearly supported career growth and progression. **91.1%** of respondents in the Internationals survey agree that the experience has helped their career.

Many cited growth in career aspirations and having a clear career plan as a result of their WorldSkills Australia involvement. Anecdotal comments from The Australian Skills Squad 2022 further validate that participation in WorldSkills Australia competitions has further supported career growth for competitors, providing access to higher paid employment which prior to the competitions, they either did not have the confidence to apply for or the capability of gaining.

WORLDSKILLS INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS' EXPERIENCE RAISING ASPIRATIONS IN SKILLAROOS

86.7% believe that the experience will assist them in advancing in their workplace

80% said that the experience has encouraged them to undertake further training

80% of respondents said that their participation in the WorldSkills International Competitions will increase their employment opportunities

When asked how being involved in WorldSkills Internationals has influenced their career Journeys, anecdotal comments from respondents show that competitors believe that the WorldSkills Internationals has encouraged them to value lifelong learning, particularly building confidence in their own skills, to seek higher qualifications and to challenge themselves by entering further competitions. The increased personal recognition and industry exposure regarding their enhanced skill set has resulted in promotions within their workplace, being sought out as teachers, moving to key leadership roles for multi-national companies, and having the confidence to launch into their own small businesses. They believe that not only were they more effective and demonstrating high performance, demonstration of key skills also worked as the catalyst to helping them gain more visibility at work and being truly appreciated by their employers. This group also talked about taking others on the journey with them and supporting their team members, showing true growth in teamwork, collaboration, and leadership skills.

They now deem it a priority to further develop their chosen skills-based careers, to envision themselves attaining better paid professional roles, and to lead the industry in educating those that have not had their opportunity. Gaining benefits "beyond competitions" was a common theme.

Respondent comments show again that greater participation in the WorldSkills journey and WorldSkills Internationals can inevitably enhance the development of Australia's future workforce, opening up a world of career growth opportunities.

STEP-UP IN SKILL-BUILDING

The Australian Skills Squad 2022 emerged from National Championships as the best of the best in their skills categories. With the understanding that moving from National Championships into the International arena requires further skill-building to be able to compete with the best from across the world, Skillaroos went into intensive training supported by passionate experts, with many contributing their own time, balancing work, and life, to relentlessly focus on honing their skills. The drive of competitors and their expert trainers is laudable and focus unmatched. In this survey, we asked competitors about how their skills were augmented, and new skills gained through not only participation in the international competitions, but also through the preparation leading up to the competitions. Furthermore, we sought to explore what skills would not have emerged without the internationals' experience and what unique value was gained through the experience that supported the building of a high-performance mindset in competitors.

When asked to discuss specifically *what the step-up was from Nationals to Internationals* and what *new skills* competitors may have gained through their preparation for and participation in the International Skills Competitions, respondents noted increasing complexity going from Regionals to Nationals and then competing on the world stage with the Internationals. On the global stage, they believe that the step up was exponential. Just being great at what they know to do was not enough. Not only did they have to produce innovative and creative solutions under enormous pressure and time constraints, but they also often had to modify or create new tools within severe time constraints to adapt to sudden changes in materials used globally. Regional competitions are fun and rewarding, national competitions require a focussed mindset, but the WorldSkills international stage requires an even higher level of resilience, adaptability, creativity, speed, and efficiency not demanded of them at the regional and national competitions.

Respondents reiterated that greater participation in the entire WorldSkills journey and particularly the Internationals, supported by expert mentors, will not only open up the minds of new and existing skilled workers to higher-order technical thinking, but will also help develop a range of critical skills for Australian workers where businesses require greater flexibility, adaptability and the ability to pivot quickly to meet the pressures presented by global competition, changing customer preferences and whims, and the impact of external Government and market forces.

When asked to discuss what skills have competitors *improved* through their preparation for and participation in the International Skills Competitions, respondents said that they have experienced a significant increase in their personal level of productivity at work. They were able to hone their strengths and close gaps in their technical and personal skills and in particular, are now able to think and act faster, produce products of superior quality with less waste, and have gained the knowledge and confidence to branch into building a greater range of products and services for their customers.

Respondents strong suggest that greater participation in WorldSkills will enable the developing workforce, and the Australian businesses that they work for, to be more competitive within regional, national, and global markets.

STEPPING UP TO GAIN SPECIFIC SKILLS TOWARDS BUILDING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE MINDSET

As anecdotally noted by many WorldSkills Champion Alumni and Experts with significant experience in WorldSkills International Competitions, the Internationals act as a catalyst in bringing many necessary skills to the fore, for competitors, enabling them to become not only good performers in the competition and beyond, but also take them closer to achieving a high-performance mindset. Desktop research was also conducted to identify, at the outset, what attributes contribute to a High-Performance mindset. WorldSkills Australia team then validated these attributes, within their environment, through consultation. Through this survey, we set out to gain more information about this phenomenon.

When asked which skills competitors would not have gained, but for their experience in participating at the WorldSkills International Competitions, majority of respondents cited Networking skills, Risk Management, Resilience under pressure and problem solving. Many said that they gained greater Planning and Organising skills, developed High performance and Results' and gained a Winning mindset. **When Skillaroos were asked about what specific skills they believe they gained towards development of a High-Performance mindset, 93.4% Strongly Agree/Agree that:**

- They are now more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in the way they deal with new environments and how to play better to their strengths
- They now understand that they need to stay disciplined and be consistent at what they do, and this will take them further to success
- They now understand the power of building good habits better
- They realise the importance of high quality and accuracy
- They understand that they need to be confident about their skills and confident about their ability to perform in a tough environment
- They now understand that they need to keep learning from mistakes to get better and pro-actively ask for feedback to help them improve
- They realise that they need to keep moving and performing even when under pressure

Responses show clearly that these competitors through their preparation and participation in the WorldSkills International competitions gained core skills to not only compete strongly with the goal to win, but also gained invaluable skills that will hold them in good stead to achieve success at work and life beyond the competitions.

The survey then delved further into what personal potential has been unlocked for competitors based on this unique experience. Respondents identified the following personal potential traits as a direct benefit of participating in the event:

- Commitment to finish what they start
- Greater vision and focusing on achieving goals
- Significantly improved time management skills
- Ability to reflect on personal strengths and weaknesses and evaluate own performance
- Stronger leadership ability and confidence to make well informed judgements / decisions using a risk management framework
- Ability to get out of their comfort zones to challenge themselves further

What Competitors said about the power of benchmarking and learning about best practice in the International Competition environment

THE POWER OF BENCHMARKING IN DRIVING ASPIRATIONS

It is clear from data gathered through Nationals Survey 2021 that benchmarking their skills against others through competitions in the WorldSkills Australia journey opens up Competitor minds to what's possible and raises true self-awareness. For some it has been an immense confidence-booster, while it has made others work harder and strive to raise their own standards. It has reinforced the development of a winning mindset with skills excellence in chosen field at the forefront of their focus. Wanting to be the best of the best, continually learning, and improving is a real skill many believe they have gained as a result of their WorldSkills Australia experience.

In the International arena, working with competitors from all over the world, benchmarking takes on a whole new life of its own. Skillaroos, as champion competitors, setting out to compete and indeed win, in this larger environment were not only intensely training to achieve personal best, but they were also actively looking at and evaluating skills and practices of competitors from other countries, seeking to learn and emulate as necessary, and also looking for ways to enhance their own performance when the competition came. Benchmarking thus, is a unique opportunity offered to competitors by WorldSkills Australia through their value proposition of enabling Australian youth to be able to compete on the global stage. We asked them about their benchmarking activity, formal and informal and it is clear from responses that the learning gained by our Skillaroos was deep and wide.

73.3 % said that learning about new tools that other countries use was not only interesting, but many said that it truly changed their thinking, showing them a new and improved way to perform

60% of respondents said that learning about where they stood in relation to others motivated them to do better and **that learning new techniques from competitors and experts from other countries was invaluable and insightful**

60% said that the experience was **helpful in highlighting areas that they needed to train harder in**, with this clarity motivating them to improve their performance

Many said that through the WorldSkills internationals' experience, they got insights into their **performance under pressure in a larger, more complex international environment** which pushed them to go further in a focussed manner.

It is clear from evidence gathered that the Australian Skillaroos 2022 actively seized the opportunity to benchmark their own and their workplace standards, processes of work and the work tools used to other competitors from around the globe. Participants shared in a global spirit of goodwill where different competitors from around the world showcased their different tools and demonstrated how to use them within the marketplace. Australian competitors thus had the opportunity to learn a vast array of traditional and state-of-the art work methods, tools, and materials, and how to critically evaluate and identify where Australian work methods, tools and materials can be improved. They also took the opportunity to share what Australia does well, as true Australian ambassadors.

Furthermore, they gained a wealth of experience learning about different cultures and values, particularly with respect to the level of investment and time committed in preparation for the WorldSkills event. Many participants noted the benefit of training with international participants in the lead up to the competition.

There are many opportunities for improvement that respondents identified through this unique experience. For example, in some skills' areas, Australian competitors had to learn to adapt to using new and improved materials which competitors from other countries were already comfortable with, having used the same not only in training, but also in their workplaces. Benchmarking thus, brought to light areas where Australia needs to catch up with the rest of the world. Respondents strongly felt that more training and investment in future WorldSkills events will improve Australia's competitive ability and indeed, credibility as a leader in skills development.

WHAT COMPETITORS SAID ABOUT HOW AUSTRALIA COMPARES TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN SKILLS AND SKILLS EXCELLENCE

Skillaroots gained valuable insights into how Skills and Skills Excellence in Australia compared with other WorldSkills International member countries as a result of their Internationals' experience. Their balanced evaluation is testament to their personal and professional growth through this experience. This evaluation can be valuable for anyone in the VET system to consider when considering continuous improvement activities to raise the bar further.

Respondents felt that they had a solid foundation of technical knowledge and that their skills were sound which helped them to perform at a strong level. However, it was clear to them on the global stage that some of their techniques were not as progressive as those employed by competitors from other countries.

Areas of opportunity identified:

- Building a greater understanding of new and emerging trends in work processes, tools and materials will be a great enabler
- Collaborating and working with peers internationally more prior to the International competitions could support competitors and experts to close gaps better
- Bringing best-practice through Internationals' experience into the education system by mentoring those that are starting their skills' journey
- More publicity about the WorldSkills competition, the process and lead up competitions regionally and nationally needs to be made available to workplaces so that business owners can realise the benefits of supporting their workers' participation, hence making it easier for competitors to put their all into the competitions
- Participants could improve their preparation for the WorldSkills competition with more one-on-one time with industry experts and training under simulated extreme pressure conditions
- Competitors felt that they needed to start their WorldSkills journey while still in secondary school as many competitors from other countries had that edge
- Investing in sending future competitors overseas to experience global standards of work, latest tools and materials used prior to competitions would be beneficial.

It must be noted here that anecdotal comments highlight that key national team strengths that came to light through this experience was the adaptability and ability for Aussie competitors to think on their feet in competitions. Respondents highlight how strong the team spirit was and how united they were in their commitment to proudly showcase Australia as a skills' leader. The team was supportive of one another throughout the training and the competitions across all areas. They were inclusive and cohesive. The Australian Skills Squad 2022 believe that whilst they were not fully aware of various international work practices, tools and materials, this unity, collaboration, cooperation and support within the team and the way they presented to the rest of the world was commendable.

The intrinsic and extrinsic benefits gained by competitors through the amazing opportunity of being able to compete on the global stage provided by WorldSkills Australia cannot be underestimated. This intense and valuable experience has helped Skillaroos grow beyond measure, personally and professionally, setting the stage for further success in their life and careers.

What competitors said about how they would apply the benefits gained through being involved in WorldSkills International Competitions

BENEFITS APPLIED- DEMONSTRABLE SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS

When asked, "What will you now do more of, better or different in your personal and professional lives as a result of your experience in WorldSkills International Competitions?", our Skillaroos identified the following:

- Will show greater resilience
- Will manage stress better
- Being more confident in their skills and abilities
- Better time management - ability to prioritise and focus on the most critical issues
- Planning and organising projects better
- Significantly improved project management skills
- Networking with greater proficiency and the ability to appreciate the value of fostering long term relationships with overseas participants, particularly within the same industry
- Greater ability to manage work and life better
- Being more aware of intercultural diversity
- Continue to learn more professionally and gain higher level certifications
- Practise getting out of their comfort zones consistently
- Sharing knowledge and encouraging as many young Aussies as possible to join the industry
- Working harder and smarter, putting new skills and knowledge to better use for the benefit of oneself and others in their workplaces

Worldskills international competitions 2022: Baking (a champion's perspective). WorldSkills Australia 2022 Skillaroo Rachel Crawford talks about her experience at WorldSkills International Competitions 2022 and beyond.

Rachel was encouraged by her teachers to participate in a regional competition and won a gold medal at the 2021 World Skills Australia National Championships and Medallion For Excellence at the 2022 WorldSkills Competition Special Edition in Bakery.

Rachel has a strong background in Hospitality, having grown up with both parents being chefs and completing a Certificate III in Patisserie and a Certificate III in Baking at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Rachel found herself competing in WorldSkills Australia National Championships 2021 after her teacher had put her name forward. Looking back, "that was the best thing to ever happen to me", Rachel beams.



A LEARNING MINDSET DRIVING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND FOCUSED ACTION

Be it training or simply daily life, Rachel says she loves learning and continually seizes opportunities to develop herself and her skills. She believes that learning makes one a more valuable employee and upcoming mentor who can pass on knowledge to others and stimulate fresh ideas and innovation. That is what will really drive the industry, Rachel explains. Her zest for learning stems from a childhood passion for culinary delights. Both her parents were chefs, and little Rachel would help her mother prepare meals at her work. "I just loved how food made people feel. No one's ever going to be sad when you hand them a plate of food".

Regionals was a gentle introduction to the WorldSkills competitions, Rachel states. Nationals is when the realisation that things were starting to get serious kicked in. At Internationals, the step up was even higher. While the list of products to be created were quite similar to Nationals, now she had to compete to an International Standard. Rachel highlights that key skills she learnt after observation were time management, different techniques for handling products, and how to calm her nerves.

Rachel notes that going from Australia into Europe, the land of exquisite baking, was daunting. Due to this perceived disparity in standards, Rachel worked doubly hard to ensure that people knew what Aussies could do. Rachel recognised that a lot of ingredients were foreign, many of which she was literally using for the first time- "Even the flour was different", says Rachel. However, she overcame this barrier through a 'familiarisation day', in which participants were supported to acquaint themselves with the ingredients that they would be using.

Rachel says that she was acutely aware of being a pastry chef, not a baker - "two very different fields". However, she used her willpower to consciously push out self-doubt and says she got out of her head and got to work! Says Rachel, "At the end of the day, I have worked hard and earned my spot to be there".

GRATITUDE FUELLING DRIVE AND DETERMINATION

When asked about what drove her, Rachel spoke about her teachers, her parents, WorldSkills Australia mentors and her immense gratitude to all who supported her on the journey. Rachel talks about her mentor even opening up a bakery that was being redone so that she could practise after-hours, giving

her not only the time and space, but also supplying ingredients. She asks, “How can I ever repay that” and gives clear insight into her motivation and drive by saying, “I’m not just doing it for me, I’m doing it for everybody who believed in me. Everyone who gave me their support, gave me their time. I’m going to work as hard as I possibly can to make them proud”.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE

Rachel is hoping to take on a mentoring role in the next round where she hopes to open up her networks and contacts to help her mentee. She says, “Sometimes you just need that source of advice, support and guidance”, and hopes to one day be that person for someone else and pay it forward. Rachel has met so many fantastic people through her WorldSkills Internationals’ experience who have all played some part in her own personal and professional development. This has motivated her to go further to share her learnings and what she has observed to be best-practice with all around her, experts, peers, and future competitors alike. She is passionate about supporting others to look at things differently, consider diverse viewpoints and techniques to enable further growth in the industry and also within WorldSkills Australia.

With her passion and drive, Rachel has the recipe to make her dreams a reality.

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT FOR A CHAMPION

It is small wonder that Rachel applied for and has now been selected to be part of WorldSkills Champion Trust for the region of Oceania and ASEAN. As part of this role, Rachel is entrusted to be the voice of young people in the WorldSkills movement, working to raise levels of engagement among WorldSkills Champions and promote active involvement in WorldSkills projects, initiatives, and activities around the world.

Rachel talks about her experience of flying to Lyon after being selected to be in the Champions Trust for WorldSkills International. The experience was like none other and indeed, built a global family of ambassadors who are individually and jointly galvanised to make a huge difference.

She is proud to have conquered one of her biggest challenges in the process- presenting in front of an audience! It’s a skill she’s “always wanted to learn” because she feels as though her experience has the power to inspire others. “It’s just kind of learning how to put my story into the correct words to grab people’s attention, keep their attention, and actually get my message across”. Not an easy feat, but Rachel faced it head on. As a group on a mission with strong purpose, the Champions Trust threw themselves into learning about how to write speeches, how to present and how to build the story that they want to tell. Rachel believes that being able to communicate with people from diverse backgrounds is a gift. She wants to hone in on these skills and harness them to inspire others to enter a WorldSkills competition “because WorldSkills is honestly life-changing”, she says. She is leading the way, as brand ambassador for WorldSkills, determined to inspire others to kickstart and continue their WorldSkills journey. Thank you WorldSkills Australia for believing in me and changing my life, shouts out Rachel.

Rachel’s dream is to travel and experience working internationally, and her involvement with WorldSkills has been a core enabler, bringing her closer to making that dream a reality. She has already expanded her network in both the Australian skills sector and the food sector, and her Champions’ Trust role will further broaden her networks, nationally and internationally, deepen her skills, and provide insight into how WorldSkills works outside of her experience as a competitor. With her passion to make a true difference, this experience is bound to have a positive, far-reaching ripple effect, as Rachel intends.

WorldSkills International Competition 2022—Bricklaying (an expert’s perspective). Andrew Hosking, Expert, and Mentor talks about his experience with WorldSkills Australia and the Internationals over the years, including Internationals 2022.

When meeting Andrew, one sees his passion for WorldSkills worn proudly like a medal of honour. His pride is combined with intense humility and gratitude for the experiences he has had through being a part of WorldSkills Australia. Andrew simply embodies so much that is great about mentors in the WorldSkills family.

With 15 years under his belt as a WorldSkills mentor, Andrew has seen and supported a wide array of apprentices compete in Regional, National, and International competitions. He joined WorldSkills as a volunteer to give back to the industry- This is a place where he has formed strong relationships with old and young alike. WorldSkills could not be a better medium to showcase the best of the best in bricklaying, says Andrew.



A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY LIKE NONE OTHER

In transitioning as an expert from Regionals, to Nationals, and eventually Internationals, Andrew has found that he could build incredible networks with like-minded national and international bricklayers. “The WorldSkills family is global, and they are all there for the right reason” says Andrew. Andrew loves the international opportunity offered by WorldSkills. Visiting another country and learning from others there is incredibly enriching- “those countries that compete in Bricklaying offer a wealth of knowledge to bring back home to Australia”, says Andrew. Cognisant of this amazing opportunity to be able to share knowledge from different countries to newer apprentices, Andrew says, “There are different techniques, different materials, different building processes” to be passed on. He says, “This global interconnectedness promoted by WorldSkills helps us to not only meet a lot of diverse people, and receive help from them, but you also get to help them in areas that you may specialise in”.

THE MENTOR SPEAKS ABOUT HIS MENTEE’S WINNING MINDSET

In mentoring Jayden (Australian Skills Squad 2022 competitor - Bricklaying) to go to Austria, Andrew had to adapt his plan of attack. Jayden had never flown overseas before. While Jayden had trained diligently for over a year, Andrew knew he had to ensure that Jayden felt comfortable when he would land in Austria to perform to the best of his abilities.

This was no issue for Jayden, however. Jayden, despite running his own business, was incredibly motivated and had great time management skills. He committed to speaking with mentor Andrew 2-3 times per week. Andrew helped Jayden build the groundwork, speaking about the nuances of the project and actually physically build the project. Andrew set time and quality expectations for Jayden in his training, which caused him to improve significantly, around “30%” within the year as Andrew puts it.

Andrew knew he saw something special in Jayden when Jayden was in the face of competition. His **sheer drive, competitive edge, and hunger** to achieve marked the traits of a clear winning mindset. “He’s been the best competitor yet”, Andrew says, citing Jayden’s commitment and drive as being standout features. While on the second day of performing, Jayden was hit by jetlag and fatigue affected his ability to work, he did a classic 180-degree turnaround, “the kind you see in movies” says Andrew, on the third and fourth day of the competition and finished it off with a bang.

Jayden undoubtedly reached his personal best in the competition. His journey was a good one, in which he learnt and grew immeasurably. All for him to pass on his knowledge and wisdom to future competitors, paying it forward.

SYNERGISTIC SKILLS' GROWTH IN MENTEE AND MENTOR

Skills learnt from the competition were that time management is crucial. Andrew points out that with bricklaying, specifically, one must not be too fast, or too slow. You need to complete the project but at the same time, not compromise the quality of said project. "Time management was everything".

Andrew highlights the best qualities in a mentee as a drive to learn, to win and to take everything seriously. Through seeing these qualities in his mentee, Andrew himself felt challenged to do better and to be a stronger mentor, developing professional structured learning and teaching systems to pass on his knowledge and advice. Andrew felt pressure to deliver, and to show that he is cut out for the job as mentor. He did not want to fail anyone or let anyone down, especially not candidates like Jayden.

Jayden showed incredible resilience and bounce back, even in training. In the pressure tests held in Australia, he would get back on the horse each and every time. Each coming day was stronger than the last.

Now Jayden has finished training and apprenticeship, he is embarking on a new journey. He will become a teacher. Andrew and Jayden want to promote best practice, which is in alignment with WorldSkills' motto - best practice across the board.

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR AUSTRALIAN BRICKLAYING

When speaking on Australia's strengths and areas for improvement in bricklaying, Andrew highlights that Australia, while young in the trade, have a very strong industry. However, he sees one problem. There are nowhere near enough bricklayers. There is an acute shortage of good bricklayers in Australia. Andrew hopes to encourage more starry-eyed young people to enter the profession, showcasing the benefits of the profession which are multitudinous and beyond financial.

"It's hard to get people interested in blue collar trades", Andrew notes. He highlights that these trades should be taken seriously as everlasting, flourishing careers can be built out of them. What Australia should be doing to alleviate this, Andrew notes, is identifying people like Jayden, who have ultimately decided not to go to university, but have the capacity to become a tradesperson of the future. It is pinpointing that capability for success when potential tradespeople are young, and guiding them down the right paths, that will make the difference, says Andrew.

Andrew hopes to take what he has learnt from the skillsets demonstrated by European tradespeople and implement this in Australian apprenticeships. Andrew says that European countries seem to be at a slightly higher level than what Australia is, specifically referring to technical drawings, general bricklaying techniques and specific pointing and jointing techniques. and hopes for greater focus and related improvement in this area. As an expert, Andrew notes that European countries have a particular edge with bricklaying, considering their rich history in building, construction, and ornate architecture. He reiterates that Australia may have missed the boat on fostering some of these traditional skills but believes that there is still room for improvement and growth.

The biggest highlight from the whole experience? Andrew says that it was the opportunity to go global. Being able to travel and learn new and different bricklaying techniques and operate as a judge in International Competitions was an eye-opening experience.

ANDREW TALKS ABOUT HIS VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As a Skills' Development enthusiast, Andrew is confident that by engaging in WorldSkills, Australia is moving in the right direction. However, we can do so much more, he says. Other countries seem to have more funding, more focussed training centres and more apprentices. He believes that we have a way to go, but with concerted action and support from all parties involved in Skills Development, be it education, industry, or government, not only can we get on the global leaderboard, but "nail our skills shortage" and create an inspired future generation of bricklayers, who want to be there and be the best of the best. After all, who wouldn't want to be a bricklayer and a great one at that!

TEAM AUSTRALIA PROFILE: SABRINA REES & IANTHE SMITH

Sabrina Rees (Australian Skills Squad 2022, Competitor, Cookery) and Ianthe Smith (Australian and International Expert and Mentor—Cookery) talk about their experience representing WorldSkills Australia at the WorldSkills International Competitions in Shanghai, 2022.

The first impression one gets when seeing Ianthe and Sabrina together is that of a seasoned team - two professionals who understand each other and have built a strong rhythm of working together with mutual respect, liking and admiration for what each of them brings to the relationship.

Ianthe is a “WorldSkills Addict”, as she calls herself, who has been a part of the WorldSkills Australia expert team, actively contributing to International competitions over many years. She has influenced hundreds of young people and peers along the way, progressing Cookery as an industry in many ways. She is a passionate mentor who takes her job of being the best she can for the benefit of the competitors she trains, extremely seriously. Sabrina is bright, energetic, and enthusiastic and started her WorldSkills journey as a competitor in Regionals 2017, going into the Nationals in 2019 and then representing Australia at the Internationals 2022. While this journey seems like the usual, what stands out when talking to Sabrina is her immense work ethic, her commitment, her openness to learning, her grit and drive to compete and one gets the impression that Sabrina is someone to watch.



THE POWER OF COMMITMENT AND DRIVE TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL BEST

While Sabrina had competed before, she did not get the results she had hoped for as a high-achiever. However, she did not let these “minor” obstacles stop her on her journey. Taking on challenging and supportive feedback from her mentor Ianthe, whom she credits with being “100% there” for her, writing it down and reflecting deeply on it, she slowly but surely rose to a point where her personal best was within reach. Ianthe commended Sabrina’s “non-stop” commitment to a long period of training, taking feedback and testing, her sheer willpower to refine her methods and persist in areas of difficulty. As Ianthe beautifully said, “Sabrina really wanted it. She wanted to win a medal and guess what- she was voted the “Best in Nation”.

Sabrina’s passion for cooking and wanting to be the best of the best fuelled her commitment and stamina to stay in the WorldSkills competitions. “Participating in WorldSkills requires numerous qualities, and one of them is to not shy away from competition- it is not something that can be done half-heartedly”, says Sabrina eloquently. Sabrina intrinsically wanted to win, wanting to showcase her immense drive and hard work on the world’s stage. Understanding that the field of cooking is quite subjective, unlike many other skills’-based professions, she simply focussed on being the best she could be, with Ianthe coaching and supporting her, providing invaluable yet honest feedback along the whole way.

TRUST IS THE KEY

In establishing a strong connection with her mentor, Sabrina noted Ianthe’s wealth of experience in the competition-sphere, and her tangible interest in and passion for helping trainees. Her guidance and advice were consistently provided to mentees, and she made herself available always, which made competitors feel truly supported in their learning. The Skills Camp Day also enabled mentees to meet one another and establish a strong face-to-face network with their mentor. It’s all about trust, Ianthe notes. Mentees should trust that their mentors have been chosen for a reason- something which Sabrina had faith in.

IMMEASURABLE VALUE: SKILLS' GROWTH AND FURTHER PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GAINS

Both Sabrina and Ianthe reiterate the pride they felt in representing Australia, as part of the tenacious Australian team of competitors and experts, showcasing skills of Australians on the world stage, calling it "priceless".

Sabrina comments that the true value she gained from competing was in the visible improvement of her own personal and professional skills. From a newbie chef in the regionals to now, Sabrina realised how much she had grown throughout the competition with the help of Ianthe. She notes that she not only got to showcase what she had trained for diligently, she realises how much the experience has helped her grow as a future world-class chef. Her technical skills have now been benchmarked internationally and she has not only learnt new techniques but is also clear about her strengths. She cites growth in confidence to lead others, growth in creativity and adaptability, growth in speed and efficiency in high-pressure environments and better time management as some valuable skills she gained through the WorldSkills Australia and Internationals experience.

Ianthe also had an opportunity to reflect on her own performance as a mentor, leaving no room for regret or missed opportunities, and understanding that doing your best is what is important for sustainable growth. She is proud of being a lifelong learner and says she learns something new and different with each experience WorldSkills makes available for her, for which she is immensely grateful.

They firmly believe that the commitment and hard work modelled at the Internationals, will continue to open doors for WorldSkills competitors, armed with their new, developed skills and knowledge. Sabrina talked about the wonderful network she has built through this experience that she feels has opened up the whole world to her and Ianthe, about the WorldSkills network that supports her and vice versa consistently always. Sabrina has been inspired to work overseas after her experience at the competition. It has broadened her horizons and opportunities for career growth in new and exhilarating environments. She now thinks "Michelin", she says. Ianthe also reflects on her hope as a mentor, that Sabrina or others will come back and become a mentor, giving back to the competition, just like Ianthe.

BENCHMARKING AND BRINGING BACK NEW LEARNINGS TO AUSTRALIAN VET AND INDUSTRY

Both Sabrina and Ianthe are united in the view that the Australian VET system is solid in Cookery. They also note that the Internationals increased their focus particularly on managing food wastage better, a growing focus globally and a trend that promises to become the norm, supporting achievement of sustainability goals. They saw that materials used by other countries were more varied, with different textures requiring different tools and techniques. Both emphasise that Australia can benefit from looking further into innovative presentation.

Sabrina and Ianthe share their plans on how they aim to disseminate best practice from what they have learned in this incredible experience. Sabrina wants to motivate other young chefs to continue their passion, even in the face of difficulties in the industry and consequent high turnover rates. Giving them honest support and knowledge to train them is key, says Ianthe, not deterring them from any aspect of the industry. Sabrina believes in the importance of setting up strong workplaces for young chefs like her. Her journey at WorldSkills is just beginning. Both want to share their new and improved knowledge widely with their peers and counterparts in education and industry to support further progress overall. Paying it forward and adding value to others coming after them is an integral focus for both.

PAYING IT FORWARD

lanthe's contributions are admirable when you realise the sheer time and effort invested in to helping WorldSkills competitors like Sabrina, without financial payback, like many other WorldSkills mentors. Recognising this, Sabrina says she was even more determined to make lanthe proud and put in an incredible amount of effort to compensate for her mentor's time and effort.

lanthe is inspired by the state of the next generation, working with young people proves to be an extremely rewarding and eye-opening experience. She is keen to expand opportunities for competitors to practice before competitions like many other countries have, like EuroSkills and Global Skills Camp. While she agrees that what Australian competitors and experts do with fewer resources than their European and Asian counterparts is "simply amazing", she is also determined to work with WorldSkills Australia in raising the bar even further.

lanthe shares her hope for Sabrina to come and share what she has learnt with newer participants, as well as continuing to support her in her endeavours. Says lanthe, "Sabrina has the potential, with her commitment and drive to be a key influencer. She is part of my succession plan and will spotlight the industry and stimulate progress. Watch this space!".

This is WorldSkills - Establishing lifelong connections between mentors and excited young mentees, giving them an opportunity to learn, grow and compete to reach their potential, and not just touch the stars, but be amongst them. Sabrina feels supported in her journey to implement adventure into her passion as a chef, going overseas and seeing what new heights she can reach after her experience at WorldSkills. lanthe feels enrichment from seeing mentees like Sabrina grow and flourish in the real world.



Sabrina Rees, International Competitor, Cookery with her International peers

TEAM AUSTRALIA PROFILE: CHRISTOPHER FITZSIMONS, BEN ARMSTRONG AND SAWAN SINGH

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Skill Practitioner Sawan Singh and Skillaroos, Christopher Fitzsimons and Ben Armstrong talk about what they gained from their experience at WorldSkills International Competition in 2022 and what they plan to do with their learnings.

PASSION AND DRIVE FORGING THE WAY

Chris, Ben and Sawan pioneered Australia competing in the Cybersecurity competition in WorldSkills International Competitions, 2022. This was new territory for WorldSkills Australia. Chris talked about how resourceful they had to be even in preparation for the competition as they did not have a frame of reference to go to. Chris' partner dropped out not being able to cope with the uncertainty. Enter Ben.



Ben, open to building new relationships and calm throughout, was a great fit for this team event. Says Chris, "We refused to crack under the pressure". He notes, "In any kind of analytical role or incident response, you've got to be able to work under pressure". Looking to the figurative light at the end of the tunnel, Chris knew that if he kept persevering, he would get a really good experience out of it. As long as he did his best, with the support of teammates like Ben, it would all work out in the end. Ben noted the same- going into regionals, they had no idea of what they were getting into. However, he kept coming back, citing the uniqueness of the competition as one of the strongest draw-in factors.

Sawan was an Infrastructure industry expert and did not have a teaching background. He joined WorldSkills Australia with an open mind to learn to be a mentor and expert in a new area, throwing himself feet first into the WorldSkills Australia bootcamp with the passion to do the best he could to help Chris and Ben compete. His goal—to create a strong baseline for Australia in this area and help his team hold their own in the Internationals. This team carried their passion and drive with them throughout this amazing journey.

BIGGEST HIGHLIGHTS

Chris cites meeting the other competitors and seeing what they know as one of his biggest highlights of the experience. Says Chris, "Everyone's coming from a different background. Everyone has experienced either a different course, different work environment or different training environments. It was enriching to interact with everyone and observe the cyber scene in their respective countries." Ben really enjoyed competing and seeing "how Australia stacks up against other countries". Sawan noted that he best enjoyed working with the other experts to help shape the competition positively for future competitors. Sawan says, "I had a voice, and I could influence others and truly contribute to change in the Cybersecurity world". He repeatedly talked about his strong sense of pride in being able to represent Australia with Ben and Chris in the best way possible. It was undoubtedly a great experience for him, to work with experts from other countries, and to also showcase Australia's best skills in Cybersecurity.

INVALUABLE GROWTH IN SKILLS

Chris cites meeting the other competitors and seeing what they know as one of his biggest highlights of the experience. Says Chris, "Everyone's coming from a different background. Everyone has experienced either a different course, different work environment or different training environments. It was enriching to interact with everyone and observe the cyber scene in their respective countries." Ben really enjoyed competing and seeing "how Australia stacks up against other countries". Sawan noted that he best enjoyed working with the other experts to help shape the competition positively for future competitors. Sawan says, "I had a voice, and I could influence others and truly contribute to change in the Cybersecurity world". He repeatedly talked about his strong sense of pride in being able to represent Australia with

Ben and Chris in the best way possible. It was undoubtedly a great experience for him, to work with experts from other countries, but to also showcase Australia's best skills in Cybersecurity.

BENCHMARKING

The team, focussed on achieving their personal best, took this opportunity to understand better how their skills and techniques compared to those competing from other countries. They were clear that they embarked on this active observation and focussed discussions, where possible to not only improve their own performance, but also to bring this knowledge back home, to help other Australians in the field. Chris found that Australia was really good at the infrastructure and Blue team challenges. With their combined experience holding them in good stead, Chris and Ben said they had that competitive edge to score higher than other countries in these areas. Other countries were better than the Australian team at some aspects of professional penetration testing and red team challenges overall, which raised the bar for them, driving them to learn furiously. It was also clear that other countries were significantly advanced in the Cybersecurity field, from an industry perspective, and had been working with their tools and implementing techniques for much longer than the Australian team had.

Chris, Ben and Sawan all saw Australians as a standout from an attitude perspective- they were not only personable, but showed immense drive, employed strong communication skills within the team and with other teams. The Australian team were eager to meet others and establish human connections-unlike some others who were singularly focussed on their prep. Australia's motto? We've prepared for this thoroughly in the lead-up, so "let's just stay calm, not cram, let's do our best and also enjoy the experience".

Sawan noted that while there will always be things that you have missed, and you can always do with 'need more time', or 'more preparation', there comes a time when you have to back yourself and that is what Chris and Ben decided to do. Says Sawan, "They worked hard, were proud of how far they had come and also showed the true Aussie spirit of being chill, cool and working together".

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL VALUE

Chris's confidence has been boosted after his WorldSkills experience. He says that the experience has encouraged him to think differently, and to experiment and develop new techniques to "go further" He has higher expectations of himself now, he says. Ben says that his participation at the Internationals has improved his organisational and time management skills, helping him to better prioritise work, and deal with large workloads under pressure. Both Chris and Ben have achieved greater career development opportunities with Ben going into a new Cybersecurity based role and Chris being given the opportunity to work in the thick of things, leading Cybersecurity-related progress in his organisation.

Chris would like to continue with WorldSkills wherever possible. He wants to use his experience to help smoothen the process for others. Chris's core piece of advice to future competitors "Try your hardest. Give it your all, consistently. You get out what you put in and so much more. The experience is simply worth it!" Chris will be supporting the next WorldSkills Australia Regionals and is also a judge at National Championships 2023. Ben highlights that the main reward from participating is "your experience and everything you learn along the way". Ben would like to see Australia establish a clear, consistent winner's streak in the Cybersecurity field, and wants to help out at WorldSkills to achieve that.

Sawan wants to spotlight areas for improvement and really target those for future competitions to set a new standard for WorldSkills Australia competitions.

Australia's budding cybersecurity team will no doubt be able to hone their skills from what they learnt through WorldSkills International Competitions and harness this global perspective to create other infallible teams.

The voice of our Competitors: summary insights

As evident from responses, WorldSkills Australia has, through the journey it offers youth, positively impacted lives of the competitors. This impact has now been amplified through WorldSkills Australia giving them the awesome opportunity of competing in the International Competitions, representing the nation.

They worked hard and built a high-performance mindset along the way on the shoulders of giants—their passionate mentors. They took their technical and human skills to a new level, gaining so many additional benefits on their journey. Their pride in representing Australia has further fuelled their commitment, focus, persistence, resilience under pressure, openness to learning and learning from their mistakes, to mention but a few attributes that they have developed in the process. Indeed, their strength to go the extra mile is nothing short of amazing.

They have learnt to think like world champions and the best of the best. The confidence that they have gained has raised their aspirations even further and opened up their world to shining new opportunities. Benchmarking their skills globally, as can be seen through their responses, has started the movement of creating, slowly but surely, a new breed of experts and future trainers/mentors.

93.3% of Skillaroos want to stay involved in WorldSkills Australia programs, which is a true testament to the value they gained which, in turn, is driving them to pay it forward to those who come after them.

WorldSkills Australia has truly achieved its key objective of inspiring youth to not only bank on their strengths, but also contribute further towards growth of skills excellence in the nation to benefit many others and indeed, to showcase Australian skills on the world stage.



Daniel Gardner and Chris Brown, International Competitors, Digital Construction

Our value to Skills Practitioners: the voice of our Experts

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: INCREASE THE EXPERTISE OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS TO WORLD BEST STANDARD

Our focus is on increasing the:

- Number of educators /careers advisors following their participation in WorldSkills Australia events reporting improvement in their expertise and capability to advise young people about technical skills pathways
- Number of vocational education and training practitioners engaged with WorldSkills Australia reporting improvement in their expertise and capability.
- Number of Australian workplace and Institutional training and education providers who have embedded WorldSkills Australia Skills Competitions standards into their development and assessment practices

WorldSkills Australia Mentors, Trainers, Experts and Judges, are highly engaged and indeed the cornerstone for the organisation's success. WorldSkills Australia's purpose resonates strongly with this group. As champions of WorldSkills Australia, VET and Skills Excellence, this group, indeed has strong influence in defining the brand and the brand experience for all stakeholders involved.

In this survey, following on from the Nationals 2021 survey, to further validate data obtained, we once again delved into new and existing mentors/trainers/experts/judges' purpose and drive- why do they do what they do, what value they get out of being involved in the skills' excellence forum, what value they believe they provide and what value they receive from their involvement.

In addition, we sought to gain specific feedback on their engagement and experience in International competitions enabled by WorldSkills Australia, and looked further into what they believed the step-up was from Nationals to the International competitions. We expressly sought Experts' opinions around skills' benchmarking on the global stage to support continuous improvement in the skills development ecosystem in Australia.

It is clear from responses that Mentors and Experts not only continue to enjoy providing value to competitors and peers through the WorldSkills Australia forum and indeed, being part of the WorldSkills Australia community, but they are truly grateful for the opportunity to contribute further to developing Skillaroos to compete strongly in the WorldSkills International Competitions. These Skills Practitioners brought to life, through their responses, the game-changing impact of Internationals on their lives and competitors' lives, personal and professional.

Engagement with WorldSkills Australia has propelled this group to raise the bar for themselves, understanding the privilege and responsibility of their key role with WorldSkills Australia with a high percentage of respondents striving to hold themselves to higher standards through continual learning and development, augmented by the internationals' involvement and experience.

WorldSkills Australia is achieving its key strategic objective of enabling skills development practitioners who are clearly reporting an increase in their expertise and capability, directly related to their WorldSkills Australia engagement.

What our Skills Practitioners said about value gained from their engagement and experience with WorldSkills Australia holistically: a snapshot

Please see below some highlights from Internationals 2022 Survey of Skills Practitioners.

SKILLS PRACTITIONERS: KEY MOTIVATORS FOR CHOOSING TO ENGAGE WITH WORLDSKILLS AUSTRALIA

75 % said that they chose to engage with WorldSkills Australia as they want to do more to promote the value of skills excellence

68.8% cite wanting to be part of a community that took pride in VET

56.3% say they engage as they want to develop themselves further by throwing themselves into a new environment of challenge

56.3% say that they want to bring skills excellence- based practices back into their workplaces

SKILLS PRACTITIONERS: KEY INDICATORS OF INSPIRATION TO CONTINUE ENGAGEMENT WITH WORLDSKILLS

62.5% said that:

- They are inspired by their enablement through WorldSkills Australia to give back to the youth of Australia
- They enjoy influencing Australia's youth to develop a skills excellence mindset
- They enjoy the new experiences they get by being part of the WorldSkills Community

56.3% said that:

- They learn and grow personally and professionally in the WorldSkills Australia Community
- They enjoy networking opportunities with the diverse community

WHAT SKILLS PRACTITIONERS SAID ABOUT HOW BEING INVOLVED IN WORLDSKILLS AUSTRALIA HAS INFLUENCED THEM

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT FOR WORLDSKILLS AUSTRALIA AGAIN

(As per Nationals survey 2021, reinforced in Regionals Survey 2022 and now further validated in Internationals Survey 2022)

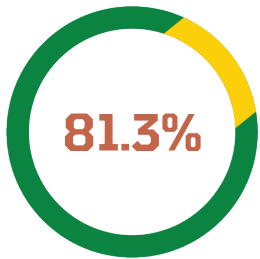
87.5 % of Skills Practitioners said that being involved in WorldSkills has motivated them in their career

86.7% said that being involved with WorldSkills Australia has supported improvement in their Teaching and Professional Practice

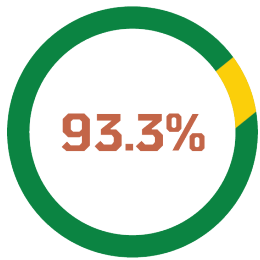
81.3% said that their technical expertise has grown as a result of their involvement with WorldSkills Australia

THE SKILLS PRACTITIONER VOICE ON THE GENERAL IMPACT OF WORLDSKILLS AUSTRALIA

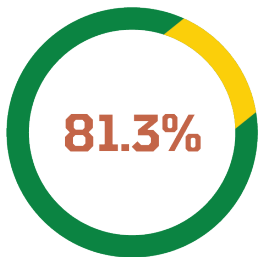
Considering how important Skills Practitioners are to the future of skills development in our youth across the nation, it is a key achievement for WorldSkills Australia to keep them motivated in their chosen careers and developing continuously personally and professionally so that they remain inspired and driven to deliver greater value to young minds in the nation.



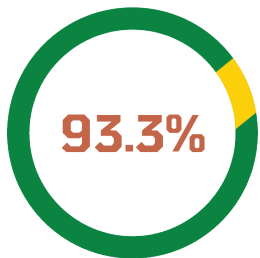
Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Raises the profile of skills



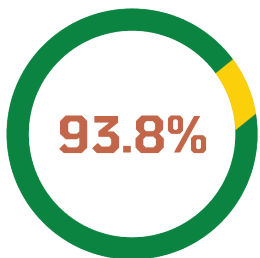
Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Promotes Skills Excellence



Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Showcases skill-based employment pathways



Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Developes pride in skill-based occupations



Strongly agree that WorldSkills Australia effectively:
Promotes greater efficiency and productivity in the workforce through the ability to implement Skills Excellence standards in the workplace

Skills Practitioners: stepping up from National Championships to International Competitions

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WHAT OUR SKILLS PRACTITIONERS SAID ABOUT WHY THEY GOT INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS

MOTIVATORS: IMPETUS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Key Motivator Descriptors for choosing to participate in the International Competitions

It is clear from responses that respondents, having gained confidence through their WorldSkills Australia journey hitherto, chose to challenge themselves further by going into International Competitions as experts to test their skills against their peers coming in from all over the world, considering it an imperative to help competitors to represent Australia strongly. It can be seen from responses that many experts have been competitors themselves and their continued engagement is testament to the passion inspired by WorldSkills Australia enabling them to now pay it forward.

Many Skills Practitioners were originally participants and have realised firsthand how WorldSkills competitions have provided greater career opportunities for themselves and the future generations of Australians through their coaching and mentoring. Skills Practitioners have indicated how they are still learning and benefitting their workplaces, through their continued connection to WorldSkills through their support in preparing participants, and their continued connections and networking with international competitors and experts.

Respondents strongly suggest that greater investment in training more skills practitioners will not only support a greater intake of competitors across all industries and skills areas, but also enable greater sharing of best practice in the Australian VET system.



It is no small achievement that 87.5% of Skills Practitioners said that their participation in International Skill Competitions has inspired them to further expand their involvement with WorldSkills Australia

What Skills Practitioners said about how being involved in WorldSkills International Competitions has influenced them

EXPERIENCE UPON ENGAGEMENT

Skills Practitioners are vocal about the multi-faceted benefits and additional value they have gained from the participation in WorldSkills International Competitions.

Skills Practitioners say that WorldSkills Australia has provided them with access to world class teaching materials and opened them up to new ideas and techniques that continue to broaden their horizons in their respective fields of expertise. This in turn, reiterate respondents, has improved the quality of training for apprentices in the workplace.

Continued networking with global experts provides skills practitioners with first-hand knowledge about the future directions of their industry around the globe. Learning about new work processes, tools and materials used in other countries via their continued WorldSkills involvement also assists with their personal professional development and the ability to incorporate contemporary, best-practice work methods into their training.

Skills Practitioners use WorldSkills International Competitions as the benchmark standard for excellence that all those learning within their respective industries need to aspire to.

Respondents clearly identified that there exist key opportunities to:

- take forward benchmarking of industry skills across Australia through greater education of and collaboration between TAFE teachers, and
- through working with training and industry experts in other countries, being able to compare work processes, tools, materials, techniques and even the benchmarking of training and assessment resources.

STEP-UP IN INFLUENCING CAREER JOURNEYS

When asked about how the WorldSkills Internationals' experience has influenced their careers, teaching and professional practice, Skills Practitioners showcased the following:

- The ability to network with experts around the world and learn new and improved techniques has supported their currency and hence, improved what they bring to their students in their teaching practice
- It keeps them abreast of emerging trends and evolution in their skill area, enabling them to innovate their teaching and professional practice, which they feel is empowering and enriching
- The experience challenges them to continually learn, adapt and strive to be the best they can be
- Supports them in incorporating better, more relevant assessment practices
- Helps them to support greater job readiness in their students and to train apprentices in the workplace better
- The experience has enabled them to share international best-practice with their domestic peers across Australia to raise the bar.

STEP UP IN VALUE GAINED

Skills Practitioners identified several areas of incremental value to their careers, teaching, and professional practice, including:

- Strong leadership skills
- Connecting with peers around the globe has broadened outlooks and perspectives
- Confidence to network and connect on a world stage, in particular, ability to refine and tailor their communication to a variety of target audiences
- Greater resilience and adaptability

STEP-UP IN PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE

Respondents resoundingly expressed how the WorldSkills Internationals' experience took them out of their comfort zones and brought to light new strengths and areas of opportunity for development in themselves. Many noted that being a trainer with WorldSkills requires development of their own expertise in a broader range of work practices and indeed, their soft skills to offer the best value to the competitors whom they were charged with training. They also had to get adept at public speaking, strategic networking, and champions at intercultural awareness. This challenge when taken up squarely helped them to become better trainers, mentors and role models to their students and peers.

STEP-UP IN SKILL BUILDING

Skills Practitioners have commented strongly on how the Internationals experience has contributed to growth in their skills, new and existing. Not only did they add to their technical skills' armoury, but they also developed valuable, important soft skills that will take them further on their career journeys, delivering even greater value to students, peers, and organisations. Here is what Skills Practitioners had to say when asked about what additional skills they have gained through their participation in International Skills Competitions:

87.5% said that they developed greater Resilience under pressure

81.3% said they developed Mentoring skills and gained Leadership Skills

68.8% said they got better at Critical Thinking and Evaluation, Decision-making, Negotiating and Communicating overall and gained particular skills in creating a high-performance training environment

Data gathered shows that the WorldSkills Internationals' experience has enabled Skills Practitioners to keep abreast of global directions and trends for their industry and gain a greater appreciation of the diverse range of work practices, teaching, and training techniques. All reiterate that they have further developed skills in Leadership, Time management, Communication, Confidence, Conflict resolution, Resilience under pressure and more, as a result of their Internationals' experience.

STEP-UP IN CAPABILITY

When asked about what skills practitioners are more able to do as a result of their participation in the International Skills Competitions, this is what Skills Practitioners had to say:

- Enhanced communication skills
- Better able to tailor their training to meet specific participant needs, both generational and cultural
- Enhanced facilitation skills
- Enhanced assessment skills
- Greater technical knowledge and the ability to coach participants to a standard of excellence

STEP-UP IN OPENING UP PROFESSIONAL WORLD

87.5% of Skills Practitioners said that their involvement in WorldSkills International competitions has grown their professional world

Anecdotal comments from Skills Practitioners showcase the value they gained from networking and learning from their peers. They cite growth in their knowledge base, greater understanding of evolving and emerging trends in their industries and continuing contact with professionals across the world contributing to and supporting continuous improvement in their own and others' teaching and industry practice. Many talk about job opportunities that have arisen directly from people they have met through WorldSkills nationally and internationally. International sharing of resources and best practice has been clearly enabled by WorldSkills Australia providing the opportunity to Skills Practitioners to participate in Internationals.



International Skill Practitioner, John Francis, Automobile Technology

What Skills Practitioners said about how they would apply the benefits gained through being involved in WorldSkills International Competitions

BENEFITS APPLIED—DEMONSTRABLE SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS

Participation in WorldSkills has enabled Skills Practitioners to apply the following benefits to their workplace:

- Increased focus on reflecting and evaluating their training styles, techniques, and their students' individual performances, striving to continuously improve their own knowledge and skills, and for their students to strive for excellence.
- Introduce new work practices, tools and materials learnt from the WorldSkills exposure into the classroom

Participation in WorldSkills has enabled Skills Practitioners to apply the following benefits to future WorldSkills events:

- Pass on knowledge to future WorldSkills Skills Practitioners, building succession
- Support the promotion of future WorldSkills events.
- Be involved in the future preparation of participants in future Regional, National, and International WorldSkills events

What Skills Practitioners said about the power of benchmarking and learning about best practice in the International Competition environment

As for the competitors, Benchmarking is a unique opportunity offered to Skills Practitioners by WorldSkills Australia through their value proposition of enabling them to be able to observe, compare and contrast practices on the global stage. We asked them about their benchmarking activity, formal and informal and it is clear from responses that the learning gained by our Skills Practitioners was deep and wide with the ability to drive key actions towards raising standards in an evidence-informed manner in the Australian Skills Development ecosystem. The WorldSkills International Competitions' experience is clearly like no other!

Over half of Skills Practitioners said that learning about where their competitors stood in relation to others, learning about new tools that other countries use and learning new techniques from experts from other countries was not only helpful in highlighting gaps in the way they trained others and the tools they used to do so, but also motivated them to do better and find improved ways to perform. The Internationals' experience was invaluable, said Skills Practitioners in supporting them to learn about areas where they needed to refine their training methods to provide Australian competitors with a better advantage when competing and also increased their motivation to influence changes in education in their skill areas to reflect current and emerging trends.

56.3% said that understanding their expertise and value in a larger, more complex international environment not only helped them back their strengths but also motivated them to do better

Not only did Skills Practitioners find interacting with other international experts prior to actual competitions interesting, but found that it was invaluable in gaining tips and tricks for improved performance. Skill Practitioners believe that with more preparation and training and knowledge of global work practices,

participants can achieve a higher standard and better competition ranking. They recommend that more exposure to project design, using state of the art tools, and knowledge and application of the latest techniques and materials at WorldSkills will provide practitioners and participants the knowledge and know how to be more competitive.

What Skills Practitioners said about how Australia compares to other countries in Skills and Skills Excellence

Skills Practitioners, like Skillaroos, gained valuable insights into how Skills and Skills Excellence in Australia compared with other WorldSkills International member countries as a result of their Internationals' experience. Not only did they learn about what they can do better, they gained strong confidence in what they saw themselves doing very well. This critical evaluation conducted by those within the Skills Development ecosystem can be valuable for anyone in the VET system to consider when considering continuous improvement activities to raise the bar further.

Australia's training for skill levels is comparable with other countries and our approach to training focusses on problem solving and adapting processes to meet specific outcomes as compared to some other countries which follow strict work processes. They said that Australian participants are creative, critical, and lateral thinkers, able to quickly adapt under enormous pressure. Australian vocational training is typically unspecialised deploying a range of work processes, tools, and materials to adapt the application to meet specific design needs. They lauded The Australian Skills Squad 2022 on being highly competitive while integrally focussing on the learning experience and on supporting the team.

They reiterate that many other countries provide more investment into pre-competition training and preparation and that Australia could achieve better results if we sponsored more participants, conducted more regional and national competitions, and organised pre-training alongside with competitors from other countries prior to the competition. They strongly believe that competitor preparation could also benefit from higher skills training, particularly at an AQF level 4 and 6 (Certificate IV to Advanced Diploma) to provide essential soft skills in project design and management and expand their learning of specialist work processes.

When asked, **"Did you identify any major areas that are missing from the Australian education system and workplace practices which prevent Australia from being the best in the world?"**, our experts said:

- I truly believe that our education is very good here in Australia, however if I were able to make a change it would be to have more advanced cookery practical units in our Certificate 4 courses which focuses on more theoretical kitchen management skills rather than advanced practical units
- Australia needs to concentrate on some areas in Bricklaying where some basic skillsets have been overlooked by the fact that our build process has become very modern, and we do not do as much detailed work as some other countries do in the industry

- Mentoring and more exposure to industry is always a shortfall that Australia's young people seem to be disadvantaged by. Mentoring and industry connections can take a variety of forms and modes, but incubators/co-labs and close industry partnerships with 'real clients, real professionals in real time' seem to produce a richer learning experience for students and in turn, create stronger WorldSkills competitors
- Sometimes there is a reluctance by the employers to give the amount of time needed to their employees to train for the WorldSkills competition. I think more awareness of the benefits to their business and their employees' improved work standard/efficiency would help them understand the importance of the training process
- Trade school is where the WorldSkills journey often begins, and they host a lot of regional competitions. If there was more importance placed on WorldSkills here I believe there would be more interest and more quality competitors to choose from
- The IT network project is too hard and is pitched at a level that is above our TAFE training system
- More publicity and awareness
- Digital construction needs a TAFE course for us to be properly competitive



Team Australia at Parliament House, July 2022

46 The voice of our Skills Practitioners: summary insights

The combination of passion and purpose driving Skills Practitioners is evidently a key success factor for WorldSkills Australia and in turn, the value Skills Practitioners gain from their engagement with WorldSkills Australia has further enriched their careers and lives. This enrichment has the potential to aid in the retention of this valued workforce within education and industry.

In this survey, Skills Practitioners have not only reiterated the immeasurable value they have gained by being a part of the WorldSkills Australia journey but are also vocal about the step-up value they have gained now through the Internationals.

As with the Skillaroos, WorldSkills Australia has opened up the world for Skills Practitioners through giving them the additional opportunity and platform to participate actively in the International Competitions. Not only have they further developed their skills, but the learnings gained through this experience has positively influenced their teaching and professional practice, which in turn will provide even stronger outcomes for their current and future students.

As evident through their responses, these lifelong learners have not only found immense value in supporting driven Skillaroos to succeed and thrive, but they have also raised the bar for themselves through continuing to challenge themselves on what they could do better to add even greater value to the competitors they have been charged with training and mentoring. Interacting and learning from their peers across the world has been a highlight of their experience. In the same token, they have also learnt to back themselves and be confident of what Australia, as a nation, has to offer towards greater skills development.

WorldSkills Australia has truly achieved its key objective of inspiring this critical workforce to not only bank on their strengths, but also contribute further towards growth of skills excellence in the nation to benefit many others and indeed, to showcase Australian skills on the world stage.

As is clear in findings from the survey, there is no question that WorldSkills Australia is effectively achieving its strategic objectives. Both respondent groups have been vocal in identifying the value they gain through their engagement with WorldSkills Australia and through WorldSkills Australia, with Internationals. They have been equally clear in providing feedback for continuous improvement where relevant. While we take a minute to recognise what has gone well, it is time to keep moving forward with strong purpose and drive.

The evidence established through this Internationals' survey builds on the strong reference point offered by Nationals 2021 survey results to measure future improvement, growth, and success.

We have the opportunity to influence our country's future through our young people, supporting them to stretch further and become the best of the best, taking themselves, their employing organisations, their families, and their communities forward. We have the opportunity to enable our experts to reach higher for themselves and in turn deliver greater value to our youth. We have the opportunity, through WorldSkills Australia's unique value proposition of taking Australian skills to compete on the global stage, of benchmarking our skills against the rest of the world and bringing best-practice back into our nation from across the world.

WHERE WE ARE NOW... THE PAST IS NOT THE FUTURE

Australia is a respected member of WorldSkills International and holds its own in many skills' categories. However, currently we only participate in 15 categories out of 60.

Strong as our achievements are, we have simply scratched the surface so far.

We need to move strongly into developing skills excellence in more categories. Considering the value gained by our youth and our experts as clearly evidenced in this survey report, there is simply no question that more is better.

To take our economy forward, we need to continue to look beyond competence and shoot for the stars, learning from around the world, benchmarking ourselves internationally as only we can do. We need to look at emerging skill trends and build for the future as a nation. We need to raise the profile of skills and skills excellence in every community in Australia, growing the volume of youth engaging with skills development and indeed, skills excellence with WorldSkills Australia.

As evidenced in this Internationals survey, the Nationals 2021 research results and again, reiterated with Regionals 2022 survey, there exists a strong appetite amongst stakeholders for improvements to be made in the larger ecosystem for greater outcomes for our young people, with many considering WorldSkills Australia as a key champion to lead this charge. There is strong engagement from all stakeholder groups surveyed with WorldSkills Australia, strong intention to add further value and indeed, become brand ambassadors for the WorldSkills Australia cause.

We, at WorldSkills Australia, will continue to morph, grow, and provide strong outcomes, setting up Australia's youth for success, becoming a strong central point of real and relevant data and advice to support all stakeholders in the ecosystem including education, industry, government, and community. What an opportunity we have before us to build and showcase skills excellence nationally and internationally!

We invite all of you in the skills ecosystem to collaborate with us in this movement to create an even better future for the youth of Australia, setting up our Skills Practitioners for success and setting Australia up as an international leader, showcasing skills excellence.

We need your help and support, now more than ever. Join us- with our combined passion and expertise, we can move mountains, taking Australia strongly into the future, not as a follower, but a leader that the world can learn from.

About WorldSkills Australia

WorldSkills Australia is part of a global movement consisting of 85 member countries, which celebrates young people achieving world class standards in the biennial competitions likened to a 'Skills Olympics'.

With a purpose to identify, demonstrate, promote and grow the excellence of Australia's skills development, we are the only Australian skills organisation that can bring this global benchmarking back to Australia. We have unique assets, resources, and networks to help raise the training standards and improve young people's technical and soft skills set and resilient mindset to ever higher standards.

WorldSkills Australia joined WorldSkills International in 1981. The first regional competition was held at Bowral in June 1982 with Australia going onto host our first and only Skills Olympics to date in 1988 at Darling Harbour in Sydney.

Australia has a very strong and proud history of involvement in WorldSkills activities. This has only been achieved with the support of government, industry, employers, and the incredibly passionate and supportive volunteer network.

Some key achievements so far:

100,000+ young Australians participate in WorldSkills Australia events

20,000+ school students and their parents will attend a WorldSkills National Championship

4,000+ volunteers around Australia contribute to WSA programs

Over 60 trades and skills are represented at WorldSkills competitions - from bricklaying to hairdressing, cloud computing to cyber security

WorldSkills champions become industry leaders, mentors, business owners and contribute greatly to the economy and their local communities.

While we take a minute to celebrate our achievements, we are not ones to rest on our laurels. We exist to influence, challenge and support Australians to develop, recognise and promote skills excellence for a thriving economy. We will continue to strive for greater outcomes, making a true difference to the youth of Australia, always driven by the collective strong purpose and passion of our WorldSkills Australia Community.

Current Strategic Objectives are:

To increase the participation of youth in high quality skills development

To increase the expertise of skills development practitioners to world best standard

Benchmark Australian skills excellence against global standards



About Playmakers Consulting

Playmakers Consulting Services Pty. Ltd (PCS) is a Melbourne-based consultancy working with independent experts in multiple sectors who come together to provide customised solutions for clients.

Built with the future of work in mind, Playmakers brings together senior executives and managers from multiple sectors who are in varying stages of career transition, breaking down barriers to create a new world. These Playmakers have individually achieved great heights of success; now come together to collectively provide stronger outcomes to deliver results through collaboration, strategic and operational leadership, with equal input and individual accountability.

PCS core business areas include Business Strategy, Business Growth, Business Process Improvement, Change Management, Capability and Culture Strategy and Development, Workforce Skills and Training Solutions, Education Innovation, Education and Workforce Grants and Tenders, Work Readiness and Graduate Programs Development. Our robust research arm feeds into all business areas providing clients with added value on all projects.

Playmakers undertake and manage small, medium and large-scale projects across multiple areas and sectors with high-performing teams, comprising of individuals with value-add skills and expertise, working together to achieve client objectives.

AUTHENTICITY, INTEGRITY, PASSION
EXPERTISE, HIGH PERFORMANCE, SUSTAINABLE RESULTS

PREPARED BY PLAYMAKERS CONSULTING SERVICES PTY. LTD.
FOR WORLDSKILLS AUSTRALIA

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