

NEWS RELEASE

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Apprentices join Worsley project

A 34-year-old former audio-visual consultant has become the first person to complete his apprenticeship as part of the construction team employed on the A\$2.5 billion BHP Billiton Worsley Alumina expansion project.

Matthew Duane, who works for Bunbury-based company Swispec, has graduated from electrical apprentice to electrical tradesman while working on the expansion project.

Worsley is on track to reach its target of employing 50 apprentices over the life of the expansion project. A total of 27 apprentices are already working across a range of trades including electrical, metal fabrication, carpentry and hospitality.

Mr Duane, one of five apprentices employed by Swispec on the project, said working on the massive construction job had provided him with an ideal opportunity to develop a wide range of skills.

Swispec expansion manager Keith Trowles said the Worsley expansion had opened doors for many workers like Matthew. "A worker can enter the project unskilled and walk away with a trade at the end of the job," Mr Trowles said.

Worsley Human Resources manager Toni Oliva said the training and upskilling of so many workers would ensure the expansion project left a lasting legacy for individuals, the region and industry in general.

Mr Oliva said the opportunities presented by the expansion project were in addition to Worsley's existing training and development program, under which 50 apprentices were currently employed at its refinery, near Collie, and mine, near Boddington. Fifteen of these apprentices were engaged this year, which was one of the largest intakes in recent times.

He said Worsley remained committed to training and development and "playing the long game" despite the global financial crisis.

Bunbury's Apprentice and Traineeship Company operations manager Mick Delfs said Worsley had been one of the biggest employers of apprentices in the South West region for many years.

Mr Delfs congratulated Worsley for its ongoing commitment to upskilling workers, especially in the current economic climate where apprenticeship numbers were falling.

"It is critically important in this climate that employers continue to take on apprentices as sooner or later there will be a turnaround and uplift in demand for qualified tradespeople and unless apprenticeship numbers are sustained we will face another shortage," Mr Delfs said.

Photo caption: Newly qualified electrician Matthew Duane (right) with electrical supervisor Terry Attwood, both of Swispec.

Photo caption: Newly qualified electrician Matthew Duane on the job at the Worsley expansion project.

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