

# Kathleen Jones

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## Overview

Completed Certificate III in Telecommunications Comtech Training Brisbane (formally known as Ramsden) | Telstra - Installer Repairer | Employed through Programmed |

I enrolled in a Certificate III in Telecommunications hosted by Telstra. It appealed to me as I already had a background of fault finding and problem solving through my job as a mechanic. Although I really enjoyed working in the automotive industry, I liked it more as a hobby, rather than a job. Having completed my apprenticeship, I knew that I had what it would take to complete the training for my Cert. III in Telecoms. I wanted a career that I could expand in and was flexible, Telstra offered this.

The position appealed most to me for the following reasons:

- Telecoms offers a diverse range of constantly changing technology and challenges which motivates me to stay on top of training and new releases in equipment.
- I thrive in jobs where every day is different. For instance, one job I could be inside programming a customer's router, and the next, I'm driving to a rural location chasing a fault on a 10km run of cable. The constantly changing environment stimulates my active mind, and ensures I never grow bored or restless.
- Having only moved to this town 2 years ago, I desired a job that would help me get to know the Burdekin community. Servicing the needs of the district has definitely fulfilled this and I've gotten to know the locals on a personal level.
- Being hosted by a well-known company, I knew the training would be effective and practical. We had trainers that were still active in the industry and able to share expert knowledge. I have never felt more confident in a job than I currently do in Telecommunications and I attribute this to my training and my team members.

## Criterion 1: Career and study achievements

Aside from completing a second Certificate III, as I mentioned before, my confidence in this profession has enabled me to perform my work duties without second guessing any of the decisions I've made and overall ensuring I can be more productive. Another substantial personal achievement was going from a trade in mechanics to a technician role in Telstra. Both professions are very unique from each other. I was able to adapt and refine skills effectively and relate similar techniques from one role to the other.

My training through Comtech allowed me to acquire new knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant for my position. We were able to experiment with what we had learned and apply our new skills in an environment where failing was also a lesson. Comtech worked very close with Telstra. We knew that the specifications we were learning, would be required and expected of us on the job. As well as my certificate training through Comtech, I also completed training blocks at a Telstra learning centre. Here, not only was my new skills from Comtech put to the test, but also a range of customer interaction skills developed. I was taught how to handle different types of customers which was extremely relevant, given that I was going to be the face of a company in the customer's eyes. This training was crucial so we not only completed our technical duties, but also our customer service duties as well.

I was someone who really struggled through school to maintain average to good grades. I found it difficult to put things into practice in a classroom environment. For people like me, trade roles are crucial. Being able to study exactly what you'll later carry out in the field helps to reinforce technical information. As I started to complete jobs on my own, if I ever became stuck on a problem, I was able to refer back to previous training materials, checking I had followed all avenues correctly. Combining on the job and off the job training would not have been successful without a mentor during the first ten months of my traineeship. He was able to monitor me and ensure that I was developing excellent habits on the job. This enabled me to feel a sense of accomplishment while still learning, making the whole experience encouraging and fulfilling.

## **Criterion 2: Communication, team and leadership skills**

The two things that have improved my written and verbal communication throughout my traineeship are, going back and doing written assignments again, and speaking to customers who were interested in how we fixed their fault. For example: having to use more understandable terms to describe the work we carried out.

Being in a small rural area, most of my team is an hour away in Townsville City. My local mentor would often travel out west for 2 weeks at a time for work, and I would have to find someone else to work alongside for the day. This was an excellent way in which I got to know all of the people in my team, and could incorporate their different knowledge and skills into my own working habits. When jobs are running low, I always strive to help out my team members with their own tasks.

While onsite at jobs, I often come across customers that are gobsmacked that a young woman is undertaking this profession. Personally, it bothers me how black and white people can view gender roles. I endeavour to be a strong example to show women that they are capable of doing anything they desire. I feel this is especially relevant to myself having completed a mechanic apprenticeship as well as my telecoms traineeship. Gender doesn't define what profession you can undertake. I strive to contribute to a world where women working in (what used to be) a male dominated industry is not out of the ordinary. Aside from just being able to do the physical work, women especially need to be able to develop adequate coping skills for tough situations. This all comes down to building up resilience and self-reliance.

I believe myself to be a powerful ambassador of my industry given that my position in a rural area exposes me to more types of telecommunication technologies than the average tech in a metropolitan area. CAN radio, pair gains systems, NBN technologies, data services and office networking are all broad aspects of telecoms, of which I have been able to study and repair while working for Telstra.

## **Criterion 3: Ability to represent the national training system at a broader level**

Telecommunications is a changing industry that has new technology and developments constantly. Training on new processes, and diagnosing skills is essential to keep current in this trade. This was evident when training with Comtech, as we had new rules and regulations coming in for NBN asset transferred areas. As the areas were migrating to NBN, it was crucial to know the rules of who (Telstra or NBN contractors) could work where. (Telstra owned services or NBN asset transferred areas). Even now, with Fiber to the Curb being implemented, our procedures have changed from what we would have done in Fiber to the Node areas, in regards to how we complete installs and fix faults for our customers. We often do E-learns well in advance to changes and fail to remember some of the finer points. It is up to us as techs to do our own investigation into these new procedures and establish them into our daily work habits.

The leading advantage of studying telecommunications is how easy it suits so many people. If you're someone who enjoys a lot of physical activity, you'd be perfect for working out in the field on long line faults where more often than not, you're pulling pit lids, digging holes and carrying batteries for radio sites. There's also the inside aspects of computer networking and router configuration available for those who prefer more of an 'office job.' To put it simply, no matter your preference of job environment, there's a position in telecoms for you. I especially encourage more women to apply for this role! Our attention to detail and persistence is a massive advantage to this profession and really makes us an asset in our teams. Don't feel daunted or scared as you will receive all the required training and build up your skills and over all confidence to do this role successfully.

## **Criterion 4: Other pursuits**

One of my biggest achievements was receiving an award for Apprentice of the Year for Northern region during my mechanic apprenticeship. Even though I no longer work as a mechanic, my cars are my pride and joy. The cars are an overall accomplishment because of the time it takes to service, fix, maintain and clean them.

My partner and I enter our cars into community shows throughout the year where not only presentation is judged, but driving skills in grass events and 'go to whoa' are part of the day. Another big achievement for me was moving town and adapting a whole new lifestyle in a rural town. Compared to living in Townsville, Ayr has made me happier and healthier. With fast food not being as accessible, food prepping is a must. I was able to loose 8kgs just by changing what I was eating. I'm also able to do more of the things that I enjoy, such as riding my dirt bike, camping

and fishing, making me content and joyful with life.

My involvement in the community includes events and walks that raise awareness for diseases and cancer. I also contribute to raffles and fund raisers at our local RSL plus participating in car shows that raise money for charities.

A political issue that I've noticed to be having great importance in local customer's minds is the Adani Carmichael Coal mine. A large majority of people I talk to are strongly for this development. The unemployment rate of Townsville and outback Queensland is staggering. Locals believe that this project can inject a much needed boost into the economy as well as providing jobs. Australia has some of the strongest environmental standards in the world. Finding a balance between the mine and the environmental aspects would be largely beneficial for the north of the state. Locals are also strongly in support of Bob Katter's idea to split Queensland into two separate states. They feel that the south end of the state gets the majority of the much needed funds for community projects and to improve roads.

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