

Queensland Training Awards 2022

Bob Marshman Trainee of the Year and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year (Region: Metropolitan)

Atahnee Simpson

Overview

The qualification I completed was a Certificate III in Business Administration. This certificate focused on administration duties and provided me with knowledge of how important business admin support really is. It has given me skills I will use for the rest of my career.

Training Organisation: Work skills

Employed by: MEGT

Hosted by: Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning

Some of the reasons for me choosing this industry is the desire to learn more about business administration. After previous studies in school, I decided to have another go studying business. I believed I would grow professionally and gain the steppingstones I would need to build a career that would test my knowledge. I knew I would also learn leaderships skills by learning how to work with others, communicate effectively with them and think critically. I believed this would transfer to my personal life and give me the power to grow into the person I want to be.

Also, I believed a traineeship was the best way to go when deciding to go back to work after my son was born. That way I could have the support I needed and also be in an environment where the course I was studying resonated with the work I was doing.

When I chose this traineeship I had no knowledge about government, but since starting I've learnt so much about what we do and how we help the people of Queensland.

Criterion 1: Career and study achievements

I chose a Certificate III in Business Administration to continue my learning from high school where I'd completed a Certificate II in Business. I also completed a Certificate III in Media which led to me getting a job in radio so this was a change of direction. I felt I needed to make that change after my son was born.

I realised that caring for him was going to be difficult when the media industry demanded so much travel and work outside normal business hours. I'd found business administration interesting and hoped it might help me find a job with more predictable hours.

Doing this course has given me so many new skills and useful knowledge that it has changed me on a personal and professional level. I have learnt to communicate effectively and modify my method and tone when communicating with different people. I've learnt time management skills and now can successfully manage my calendar and organise my workload so that I get everything done. All the individual skills I have now mean I can even step in and do the work of more senior team members when they're on leave. On a personal level I've learnt to take constructive criticism and apply it to my work.

I have gained so much self-confidence along the way too. A big part of that is the relationships I've built. I now have mentors all around me who have given me lifelong skills and the best support system. Everyone believes in me. I have never been more motivated to be successful. They have become more like family to me.

When I first started my traineeship, I wasn't aware of how government worked and what its purpose was. Since working for them I have gained a new view and understanding and passed my knowledge on to my friends and family. I've learnt about processes, records management, confidentiality, and

ethics within Government. The things I learnt in my Certificate III have enabled me to complete the duties of my role in State Development and now I have started working autonomously on my own projects.

I have been able to bring energy, enthusiasm, and an attitude of wanting to get things done to my new team. In a way I feel I've had a part in tightening the bonds between my team members too. I also bring a lighter joking side to the workplace.

Criterion 2: Team and communication skills

Every time I completed a training unit I'd discuss what I'd learnt with my colleagues. They were always in the loop because I was applying the skills into the workplace. When I was doing a unit about writing minutes, I would write minutes for our team meetings. When I was learning about health and safety, I would ensure workplace health and safety practices were complied with around our office and identify risks. My supervisors and colleagues would always encourage me to learn more about each topic than what was covered in the teaching notes.

When I would go to external meetings with my colleagues, I would learn so much more about the department, the work the Economic Development officers entails and how much they are involved in the business community. I would also get a chance to think about how what I was learning in my traineeship could be used in other workplaces.

My absolute favourite thing about working in a team is the family environment. They are like family to me and have helped me flourish into who I am today and continue to shape me into the person I want to be. They push me to want to further my career with the department by letting me shadow them to learn more about their roles.

Another plus I love is the communication and team skills I have learnt working in the office. Before starting my traineeship I struggled to communicate. Now, after completing it, I believe I can successfully communicate about projects and work easily. I have the confidence to talk to businesses about the support we provide. I've always been able to work in a team due to playing sports in school, but I expanded my knowledge of teamwork by learning to share the workload and successfully communicate my ideas.

Having a determined and positive attitude would have to be the main important trait I believe in. I try to keep going even when I feel like I'm failing. I think my enthusiasm and determination might even help lift the team. Sometimes my supervisors say they have nothing more for me to do so I go to other members of the team and find out how I could help them. This helps them get their work done and helps me learn more about our work.

Criterion 3: Ability to be an Ambassador (representative) for training in Australia

Outside work I practice leadership every day. I have a goal to influence my family and my people by showing them that even though I'm a young single mother I can get a job and develop a successful career.

Since I grew up in Cherbourg, I pass on my knowledge of community and my people to the department providing insights into how to approach and connect with an Indigenous community respectfully. Within my team I share knowledge of my culture. Integrating Indigenous culture into our office has become a goal for my team now and I play a central role in that. One project I did was designing and painting indigenous artwork on a picture frame for an Indigenous clan map for our office.

I was lucky enough to be a representative at the opening of a call centre my department helped deliver in my hometown of Cherbourg. The best part about this was being a leader and role model to my family and people in Cherbourg. So I was delighted when the school and TAFE there asked me back to talk to the students to inspire them to do training and start on a career like I am doing.

I attend Indigenous business events with my colleagues speaking to businesses about what our department does and the support we offer. An example of this is Black Coffee meetings, a grassroots

Indigenous business network that meets monthly to support each other and hear about business opportunities. I combine what my team has taught me about business support with my natural ability to connect with community.

I have become a mentor to another Indigenous trainee in our department. We have weekly meetings and talk every day so I can support her with her training and work in our department.

Before commencing my certificate, I struggled to understand the process and I found it hard to contact my trainers with questions. Although I had this struggle, I could rely on my supervisors and colleagues to give me support to understand the modules. I think the quality of my training was high due to this support and because I kept always striving to complete each module and learn as much as I could. My supervisors challenged me to use what I learnt in the workplace and take it further than just learning what I needed to complete each unit.

Criterion 4a: Community engagement

I am a proud (insert traditional owner group) woman. My family are connected to our community and we participate in local cultural activities and events which is important for my children to see and be involved in.

I attend country regularly to recharge my spirit. Being on country brings the light back and motivates me to continue to chase my dreams.

On commencement of my certificate my family were proud to see me represent my mob and work for the Government. Completing my certificate was motivating for my family and friends and inspired them to want to make a change and break the intergenerational trauma we faced as a family.

Through work I attended the opening of a new call centre in our community. During this event I was asked to come back and talk to the school children about my traineeship experience hoping to inspire the next generation. I'm working towards doing it as soon as I can this year.

My drive and passion about the injustices Indigenous people face daily are what motivates me to be a role model. I want to change the stereotypes Indigenous people face. I believe I can be a leader to Indigenous individuals across Australia. This is why I continue to learn and shadow colleagues. I attend work events and network. I have learnt about the indigenous people's country I live on. It motivates me to help them and continue my goal of being a leader and a representative for First Nations.

When I started my first job at the age of 16 as a cadet journalist, I worked for the National Indigenous Radio Service and would report First Nations news across Queensland. That's where I first gained my passion for being a leader for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because I would hear about all the injustices my people faced. Having to produce stories about deaths in custody and land rights was an eye opener. I was fresh out of school and was blind to all these problems, so it was very hard to interview the families about these injustices. Learning of the discrimination and pain they were going through lit a fire in me.

Criterion 4: Other qualities and pursuits

When I started my certificate, I struggled using Microsoft products. I only had a basic knowledge and wasn't aware I needed to have more skills. I asked my supervisor many questions and was given extra training. I was provided work that aligned with building my skills in these programs. It helped tremendously, and I found a love for Excel.

Before attending site visits with my colleagues I did research about new clients to provide them with the background they needed to meet the business. I was surprised by how impressed they were with my research and how I documented it.

Attending these visits made me understand the role of an economic development officer. Although this is not part of administrative duties, it taught me about the work I support and how to present yourself when representing your team at other workplaces.

I lacked time management and organisational skills when I started my certificate too. I didn't know how to file information or organise my notes. When I started my time management unit, my supervisor organised work for me that involved time management. I completed my own research on how to use software tools and schedule time for tasks. This taught me to organise my days so that I wasn't overwhelmed, was able to take breaks and switch to different tasks.

A personal challenge that impacted my training was work life balance. It was hard for me. As I am a young mother I feared committing to training because I wanted to always be available for my son. However, after starting my certificate, I established a routine and my work/life balance became easier. I'm lucky to have colleagues who are parents, understand my struggle and provide advice on how to focus on work and be there for my son.

If I become trainee of the year, I would be representing young Indigenous people across Australia and even expand it to young single mothers across Australia who struggle to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I want to be an inspiration to these people and motivate them to be somebody. I want to break the stigma that indigenous people can't because we can. I want to be the person that breaks the cycle in my family. I believe I can do that by expressing my ideas, by continuing to learn off my peers and asking questions when confused.