

Traditional trade apprenticeships: experiences and outcomes

Josie Misko, Zhaoyi Gu and Michelle Circelli

National Centre for Vocational Education Research



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About the research

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The apprenticeship model of work-based training is often held up as an effective mechanism for enabling individuals to learn specific skills and subsequently transition to employment in a skilled occupation. Over time, technological, regulatory and social changes have affected the training of apprentices. It is in this context that NCVER undertook a three-phase study to investigate the demand for traditional trade apprentices and determine whether the training they receive meets current needs.

The first phase of the broader study examined the context for traditional trade apprenticeships in Australia, revealing trends in training activity and completions, and describing the application of current and past government incentives. This phase also detailed international apprenticeship models and practices to enable a comparison with Australian approaches. The second phase presented the outcomes from in-depth interviews and focus groups, in which employers, trainers, apprentices and relevant government officials discussed issues relating to various aspects of apprenticeship training. This final component of the project draws primarily on findings from the 2019 Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey to examine the experiences of the traditional trade apprentices themselves. Qualitative data from the focus groups of traditional trade apprentices in the second phase of the broader study are used to highlight the experience of, and give voice to, the traditional trade apprentice.

Key messages

- Traditional trade apprentices report high levels of satisfaction with the off-the-job training they receive, irrespective of whether they complete their apprenticeship.
- Those who do not complete a traditional trade apprenticeship predominantly cite employment-related reasons for leaving their apprenticeship, highlighting how critical the role of the employer is in supporting apprentice completion.
- Completing a traditional trade apprenticeship results in good employment outcomes. In 2019, over 90% of traditional trade apprentices who completed their apprenticeships were employed, compared with about 75% of non-completers. Completers also fared better than non-completers in staying employed with the same employer as their apprenticeship and having a higher median annual income.

Simon Walker
Managing Director

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Contents



Executive summary	7
Findings	7
Background	9
The focus groups	9
The surveys	9
Starting a traditional trade apprenticeship	10
Pre-apprenticeship training	10
Learning about a traditional trade apprenticeship	10
The experiences of undertaking a traditional trade apprenticeship	12
Taking up a traditional trade apprenticeship	12
Reasons for leaving a traditional trade apprenticeship	13
Changing employers	14
Satisfaction with the apprenticeship	15
Outcomes from traditional trade apprenticeships	18
Benefits of doing a traditional trade apprenticeship	18
Employment and earnings	20
Post-apprenticeship studies	21
References	21
Appendix A	22
Appendix B	25

Tables

Tables

1	Number of traditional trade apprentice respondents to 2010 and 2019 Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destination surveys, by completion status	9
2	Pre-vocational and pre-apprenticeship courses completed by traditional trade apprentices, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)	10
3	Sources of information about apprenticeships used by traditional trade apprentices prior to commencing their apprenticeship, by completion status, 2019 (%)	11
4	Main reason for undertaking an apprenticeship for traditional trade apprentices, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)	13
5	Main reason for not completing a traditional trade apprentices, 2010 and 2019 (%)	14
6	Main reason traditional trade apprentices changed employers after training, by completion status, 2019 (%)	15
7	Traditional trade apprentices satisfied and dissatisfied with the apprenticeship overall, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)	16
8	Traditional trade apprentices satisfied with aspects of the off-the-job training, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)	16
9	Traditional trade apprentices satisfied with aspects of the employment associated their apprenticeship by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)	16
10	Main benefit received from undertaking a traditional trade apprenticeship, by completion status, 2019 (%)	18
11	Bullying observed in the workplace by various characteristics for completers and non-completers, traditional trade apprentices, 2019 (%)	19
12	Employment outcomes for traditional trade apprentices, by completion status, 2019 (%)	20
13	Relevance of training to current job for traditional trade apprentices, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)	20
14	Median annual income for traditional trade apprentices, by completion status, 2019	20
15	Further studies undertaken by traditional trade apprentices after the apprenticeship training, by completion status (%)	21
A1	Traditional trade occupations, by trade group	22
B1	Traditional trade apprentices dissatisfied with aspects of the off-the-job training, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)	25
B2	Dissatisfaction with employment aspects of the apprenticeship, traditional trade apprentices (%)	25



Executive summary

This report is the final component of a broader study undertaken in three phases, the first two of which are described briefly below. It looks at the experiences of the traditional trade apprentice and in doing so focuses primarily on findings from the 2019 Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey, with data from the 2010 survey included, where relevant, to examine changes over time. The survey allows us to investigate the experiences and outcomes of apprentices who did and those who did not complete their traditional trade apprenticeship. Where appropriate, findings from the focus groups of apprentices conducted in 2019 as part of the second report (Misko & Wibrow 2020) are included to examine in more detail the experience of the traditional trade apprentice.

In this research, a *traditional trade* apprenticeship was identified as applying to the following occupations: building trades; electrotechnology and telecommunications trades; engineering trades; food trades; motor mechanic, repairer and vehicle builder trades; precision trades; skilled animal and horticultural workers; and other traditional trades (for example, hairdressers, cabinet-makers, printers etc).

The first phase of the broader study focused on trends in training activity over the period 2012 to 2018, including completions, along with an analysis of the application of current and past government incentives, and some comparisons with apprenticeship systems used overseas. The analysis of trend data found that demand for traditional trade apprentices has been relatively stable over the last 15 years, with changes generally reflecting the prevailing economic conditions. Similarly, the investigation of government incentives for employers of traditional trade apprentices also found these to have remained stable, despite various changes to the overall apprenticeship incentives scheme. In real terms, however, they have actually decreased (Misko 2020).

Through in-depth interviews and focus groups, the second phase collated qualitative data on those elements of apprenticeship training that the key players (that is, employers, trainers, relevant government officials and apprentices) perceived to be effective, or otherwise, and those areas that need improvement. This study found that, in the main, the key players remain supportive of the current combination of off- and on-the-job training under a contract of training. Both these forms of training were acknowledged as providing apprentices with the technical skills that underpin the knowledge, attributes and behaviours necessary for their trades. However, a key challenge is that the increasing specialisation in some industries means it is becoming more difficult to align the off-the-job learning content with tasks being done on the job (Misko & Wibrow 2020).

Findings

The experience of undertaking a traditional trade apprenticeship

The main reasons cited for starting a traditional trade apprenticeship in both 2019 and 2010 were employment-related, for example, wanting a job or wanting to work in a particular type of job.

For those who did not complete an apprenticeship, the main reasons for non-completion changed very little between the 2010 and 2019 surveys, with employment-related reasons continuing to be the key concern. In 2010, it was highly likely that the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) had an impact on their ability to continue, with a higher proportion than in 2019 losing their jobs or being made redundant. In 2019, there was no single employment-related reason that dominated, although 12% of traditional trade apprentices either left their apprenticeship because they did not get along with their boss or co-workers

or had lost jobs or been made redundant. These findings highlight the critical role played by employers in supporting apprentice completion.

Not unexpectedly, the proportions satisfied with their apprenticeship overall, as well as with the off-the-job training and the features of their employment related to their apprenticeship, were higher for completers than non-completers in both 2010 and 2019. A positive aspect to the figure for the traditional trade apprentices who did not complete their apprenticeship is the high rate of satisfaction with the off-the-job training, with around 70% of non-completers satisfied in both 2010 and 2019.

Outcomes from traditional trade apprenticeships

The main benefits received by traditional trade apprentices from completing their apprenticeship were employment-related and, in particular, that they gained a qualification/trade.

In contrast, non-completers gained extra skills for their job and cited the experience as the main benefit of undertaking their apprenticeship. Of concern is that almost 18% of non-completers indicated they had received no benefits from undertaking a traditional trade apprenticeship.

Completing a traditional trade leads to good employment outcomes. In 2019, over 90% of traditional trade apprentices were employed after completing their apprenticeship, compared with about 75% of non-completers. Completers also fared better than non-completers in staying employed with the same employer as their apprenticeship. Income earnings were also better, with the difference in median annual income approximately \$19 000 in favour of completers in 2019.

For many traditional trade apprentices, completing or leaving the apprenticeship was not the end of their education or training experience, with around a fifth of completers and a third of non-completers going on to further study. In 2019, almost 15% of non-completers moved on to another apprenticeship, suggesting they still saw value in pursuing an apprenticeship.



Background

The focus groups

As part of the second phase of the broader study on traditional trade apprenticeships (Misko & Wibrow 2020), face-to-face focus groups were held with apprentices in South Australia to understand, from their perspective, what is effective, what is not, and what needs improvement in apprenticeship training. A total of 10 apprentices participated in the focus group for apprentice carpenters and joiners; eight participated in the focus group for chefs; and five participated in the focus group for fabrication apprentices.

The surveys

The 2010 and 2019 Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destination surveys both collected information from apprentices and trainees who completed their training (completers) or cancelled or withdrew from an apprenticeship and did not return to the same qualification (non-completers). A total of 4395 traditional trade apprentices responded to the 2019 survey and 2158 to the 2010 survey (table 1).

The surveys looked at employment outcomes, reasons for non-completion, further study outcomes and satisfaction with the training. Questions were also asked about their reason for starting an apprenticeship and the benefits they received from their training. The 2019 survey also included questions on the sources of information accessed by apprentices before embarking on their apprenticeships and whether they had witnessed bullying in the workplace (NCVER 2019).

Table 1 Number of traditional trade apprentice respondents to 2010 and 2019 Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations surveys, by completion status

	2010		2019	
	N	%	N	%
Completers	1078	50.0	3257	74.1
Non-completers	1080	50.0	1138	25.9
Total	2158	100.0	4395	100.0

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.



Starting a traditional trade apprenticeship

Pre-apprenticeship training

Over 30% of completers and non-completers had undertaken some training before beginning their traditional trade apprenticeship, a slightly higher proportion than in 2010 (table 2). In 2019, over 80% of both groups considered such programs to be relevant to their apprenticeships.

Table 2 Pre-vocational and pre-apprenticeship courses completed by traditional trade apprentices, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)

	2010		2019	
	Completers	Non-completers	Completers	Non-completers
Completed a pre-vocational/ pre-apprenticeship course	28.8	26.9	32.6	30.3
Of these: Course relevant to their apprenticeship	83.9	81.6	88.5	85.0

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.

Learning about a traditional trade apprenticeship

The 2019 survey collected information relating to where and from whom apprentices first sourced information about undertaking an apprenticeship. They were also asked about the source for their initial information on apprenticeship pay rates.

The most common source of information cited by traditional trade apprentices was family, followed by school teachers or a training provider (table 3). In regards to information about pay rates, almost half of traditional trade apprentices first received information on pay rates at work. Over a quarter were unaware of how much they would be paid before starting their apprenticeship (table 3).

Table 3 Sources of information used by traditional trade apprentices prior to commencing their apprenticeship, by completion status, 2019 (%)

	Completers	Non-completers	Total
Where first received information about doing an apprenticeship			
Parents/family	33.7	23.2	30.6
Teachers at school/training provider	30.4	28.6	29.8
Research on the internet/advertising	17.8	23.9	19.6
At work/from employer/work colleagues	17.8	17.7	17.8
Friends	17.1	17.2	17.1
Attending careers days/expos	9.2	7.4	8.6
Job network provider/employment agency	0.9	3.1	1.5
Other	3.8	6.2	4.5
Where first received information about apprenticeship pay rates			
At work/from employer/work colleagues	47.2	41.6	45.6
Research on the internet/advertising	17.8	16.9	17.5
From the Fair Work Ombudsman	10.7	10.7	10.7
Teachers at school/training provider	6.5	7.7	6.8
Friends	6.3	6.9	6.5
Parents/family	3.9	4.0	3.9
Other	2.0	0.5	1.5
Job network provider/employment agency	0.5	1.2	0.7
I didn't know how much I would be paid before I started my apprenticeship	27.4	29.3	28.0

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019, unpublished data.



The experiences of undertaking a traditional trade apprenticeship

Employment-related issues constituted the main reasons for both entering and leaving an apprenticeship for the respondents to the 2010 and 2019 surveys, as well as for the apprentices who participated in the focus groups.

Taking up a traditional trade apprenticeship

In 2010 and 2019, the most common reasons given by traditional trade apprentices for starting their apprenticeship were employment-related, for example, wanting to work in that type of job or wanting a job (table 4). However, for both completers and non-completers these reasons decreased substantially over the period, more so for non-completers than completers.

Participants in the focus groups also primarily cited employment-related reasons for starting their apprenticeships, although other reasons were proposed.

Among the apprentice carpenters and joiners, their enjoyment of working with timber, using their hands and working in outside jobs were key motivators for taking up the apprenticeship. This group included individuals who had moved into the trade from another trade (mainly to help in family businesses) and those who had moved into the trade from other occupations and study programs, either because it afforded them an opportunity to get a job in construction (which was a skill-shortage area) or because they had tried other jobs but did not like them.

I tried real estate, but it was no good and I liked working outside.

(Third year apprentice)

I went to uni first, but I was interested in construction so came to do the trade.

(Second year apprentice)

For the apprentice fabricators, job security was a key motivator, although some had selected the trade because they had expected to enter a trade on leaving high school. Others, from farms, had been using welding skills on the farm and had decided to learn the trade. There were also existing workers who had been asked to become an apprentice by their current employers; they were motivated by the opportunity to progress in the company.

For some of the apprentice chefs, following in the footsteps of family members, loving cooking and being asked to do an apprenticeship were the reasons for starting an apprenticeship.

I was already in the industry and the head chef said 'I want you to do an apprenticeship'. I wanted to do it and applied.

(First year apprentice)

Table 4 Main reason for undertaking a traditional trade apprenticeship, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)

	2010		2019	
	Completers	Non-Completers	Completers	Non-completers
Employment-related	71.2	75.5	55.6	54.6
Wanted to work in that type of job	47.7	52.7	38.7	38.8
Wanted a job (any type)	15.9	15.2	9.3	12.2
It was a requirement of my job	2.4	1.5	4.6	1.9
Recommended/offered by company (non-mandatory)	5.3	6.1	2.3	1.6
Change of career	na	na	0.6	0.0
Training-related	22.4	20.0	29.6	31.7
To gain a recognised qualification or certificate	17.7	14.8	19.3	19.7
Get paid to learn	4.2	4.4	8.8	10.3
Opportunity to further knowledge and skills	0.4	0.8	1.2	1.4
Part of a school program/curriculum/ offered through school/requirement for school	na	na	0.3	0.3
Future prospects	4.3	3.1	7.5	4.9
To start my own business	1.2	0.6	3.1	2.4
It had good job prospects	2.7	2.2	2.9	1.9
It had good pay once qualified	0.4	0.3	1.5	0.6
Other reasons	2.1	1.4	7.3	8.7
Passion for subject/area of interest/for enjoyment	na	na	1.9	2.7
Didn't get into university/didn't want to go to university	2.0	1.2	1.3	1.1
To get out of school/didn't like school/ dropped out of school	na	na	0.7	0.9
Family influence/interest/tradition/ business	na	na	1.5	0.6
Recommended by friend/someone who had undertaken this	na	na	0.1	0.3
Something to fall back on	na	na	0.1	0.1
Good location/closer to home	na	na	0.1	0.1
Travel	na	na	0.0	0.0
Other	0.1	0.2	1.7	2.9

Note: na – not applicable. This response category was not available in the 2010 survey.

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.

Reasons for leaving a traditional trade apprenticeship

The main reasons for not completing a traditional trade apprenticeship changed little between 2010 and 2019, with employment-related reasons continuing to be the key concern (table 5).

In 2010 a key highlight of the data was that over a quarter of traditional trade apprentices failed to complete their apprenticeship because they had lost their jobs or were made redundant, possibly in response to the Global Financial Crisis. By contrast, in 2019, no single employment-related reason dominated (table 5) although 12% either did not get on with their boss or work colleagues, or had lost their job or been made redundant.

Table 5 Main reason for not completing a traditional trade apprenticeship, 2010 and 2019 (%)

	2010	2019
Employment-related	78.0	73.9
I didn't get on with my boss or other people at work	12.4	12.1
I lost my job/was made redundant	26.9	11.9
I didn't like the type of work	8.4	8.1
Poor working conditions	3.6	8.0
Left job/changed career	11.1	7.7
The pay was too low	5.5	6.6
Apprenticeship or traineeship cancelled/discontinued	2.7	6.6
Got offered a better job	2.4	5.8
I was not happy with the job prospects in the industry	4.2	3.3
I transferred to another apprenticeship	0.9	2.4
Business closed/company went into liquidation	na	0.8
Not able to use the skills I was learning at work	na	0.7
Training-related	5.7	10.9
I wasn't happy with the on-the-job training	2.3	4.0
Lack of interest/support	na	3.5
I wasn't happy with the off-the-job training	1.1	1.3
Studying elsewhere (university/school)	0.8	1.1
I found the study too difficult	1.6	1.0
Personal reasons	15.1	13.4
Illness/health reasons	5.0	5.7
Family reasons	4.0	3.7
Moved	3.4	2.5
Problems with travelling/transport	1.4	1.1
Lack of time	1.3	0.4
Other reasons	1.2	1.8

Note: na – not applicable. This response category was not available in the 2010 survey

Source: NCVET Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVET Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.

Changing employers

In 2019, around half of traditional trade apprentices had changed employers after leaving their apprenticeship. The main reasons for doing so were employment-related. Within this group a higher proportion of completers than non-completers changed employers because they were offered a better job or the pay at their previous job was too low. For non-completers, the main reasons were that they had lost their jobs or were made redundant, had difficulties getting along with their boss or co-workers, they wanted to try something else or for personal reasons (table 6).

Table 6 Main reason traditional trade apprentices changed employers after training, by completion status, 2019 (%)

	Completers	Non-completers	Total
Total changed employers	44.8	86.3	55.4
Employment-related	86.3	83.9	85.3
Got offered a better job	14.8	8.9	12.5
The pay was too low	14.2	7.1	11.4
I lost my job/was made redundant	8.3	15.5	11.1
For a change/to try a different career	8.5	13.1	10.3
I didn't get on with my boss or other people at work	8.6	12.4	10.1
Poor working conditions	6.7	8.7	7.5
Broaden knowledge and skills	8.2	1.5	5.6
Lack of work	5.5	3.9	4.9
Employment not continued at the end of my training contract	6.6	2.0	4.7
I didn't like the type of work	2.3	5.5	3.6
I was not happy with the job prospects in the industry	1.6	2.9	2.1
I transferred to another apprenticeship/traineeship	1.1	2.5	1.7
Personal reasons	7.6	11.5	9.1
Moved	3.9	4.3	4.0
Family reasons	1.6	2.4	1.9
Problems with travelling/transport	1.4	2.4	1.8
Illness/health reasons	0.7	2.4	1.4
Other reasons	6.1	4.7	5.5
Started my own business/work for myself	2.8	0.3	1.8
Business closed down/changed owner	1.6	1.4	1.5
Commenced study/went to university	0.0	0.5	0.2
Other	1.8	2.4	2.0

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019, unpublished data.

Satisfaction with the apprenticeship

Traditional trade apprentices responding to the 2010 and 2019 surveys were asked to reflect on their apprenticeship and to rate their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction¹, along with their satisfaction with the off-the-job training and employment aspects.

Not unexpectedly, the proportions of traditional trade apprentices satisfied with their apprenticeship overall (table 7), with the off-the-job training (table 8), and with the employment associated with their apprenticeship (table 9) were higher for completers than non-completers in both 2010 and 2019.²

Surprisingly, the proportions of non-completers satisfied with the off-the-job training in both 2010 and 2019 were very high, at 73.6% and 70.3% respectively (table 8). With regard to their employment, non-completers were far less satisfied than completers with their relationships with co-workers, working conditions, type of work, supervision and pay (table 9).

¹ Satisfaction is measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly dissatisfied to strongly satisfied. The neutral category is removed, leaving two groups: those satisfied with training and those not satisfied with training; hence, totals reported in table 7 do not add to 100%.

² Dissatisfaction with off-the-job training and employment are presented in tables B1 and B2.

Table 7 Traditional trade apprentices satisfied and dissatisfied with the apprenticeship overall, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)

	2010		2019	
	Completers	Non-completers	Completers	Non-completers
Satisfied overall	85.7	51.1	89.0	51.5
Dissatisfied overall	4.0	26.5	4.2	28.1

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.

Table 8 Traditional trade apprentices satisfied with aspects of the off-the-job training, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)

	2010		2019	
	Completers	Non-completers	Completers	Non-completers
Off-the-job training overall	82.1	73.6	87.0	70.3
Fairness of the assessments of skills and knowledge	87.0	79.3	87.8	72.0
Relevance of skills to workplace	78.9	71.5	87.0	75.7
Quality of the training facilities and equipment	74.3	74.4	80.2	75.1
Skills learnt were up to date	na	na	82.0	74.0
Quality of trainers/teachers/instructors	na	na	86.0	68.9

Note: na – not applicable. This question was not asked in the 2010 survey.

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.

Table 9 Traditional trade apprentices satisfied with aspects of the employment associated with their apprenticeship, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)

	2010		2019	
	Completers	Non-completers	Completers	Non-completers
Employment overall	85.3	53.3	84.9	56.9
Relationship with co-workers	90.8	70.2	88.1	70.1
Skills learnt on the job	88.4	67.3	90.5	77.2
Type of work	84.0	62.4	88.5	69.3
Hours of work	83.3	65.5	85.5	72.2
Working conditions	83.0	60.2	85.2	64.9
Supervision	81.3	59.4	82.7	63.6
Pay	55.6	40.4	62.4	48.7
Safety in the workplace	na	na	86.1	72.5

Note: na – not applicable. This question was not asked in the 2010 survey.

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.

The focus groups of traditional trade apprentices also highlighted the generally high level of satisfaction among these apprentices. Undertaking the apprenticeship was a satisfying experience, in that they had learnt new skills and many felt more knowledgeable; others had been able to save money, while yet others had been able to develop their identities as tradies. All apprentices were looking forward to becoming fully qualified, mainly because they would earn both more money and more respect.

I am more confident at work than at TAFE [technical and further education institute].

(Third year apprentice carpenter and joiner)

We learn more at the job. TAFE has certain ways of doing things. Employers' ways are quicker and easier.

(Third year apprentice carpenter and joiner)

I love the industry for the social aspects. We all finish at the same time and we can go out together. (Fourth year apprentice chef)

There were some, however, who noted the negative or less satisfying aspects of their apprenticeship. For example, one of the participating apprentice chefs said:

Yes, it is a hard life, you miss out on social and family time. (Fourth year apprentice chef)

Another apprentice chef commented:

It makes us understand why chefs leave and apprentices don't finish. (Third year apprentice)



Outcomes from traditional trade apprenticeships

Benefits of doing a traditional trade apprenticeship

Tied to feelings of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with a traditional trade apprenticeship are the benefits associated with undertaking the apprenticeship. In 2019, a higher proportion of completers than non-completers indicated that the main benefit they received from undertaking a traditional trade apprenticeship was employment-related and, specifically, that they gained a qualification/trade – an unsurprising finding.

Non-completers also cited employment-related benefits as the main benefits received, although in considerably lower proportions than completers. Unexpectedly, they identified employment-related benefits, such as gaining extra skills for their jobs and experience, in greater proportions than completers. A further positive finding is that non-completers also reported acquiring a range of personal benefits, especially knowledge and advancing their skills more generally. Of concern, however, is that almost 18% of non-completers, compared with approximately 2% of completers, claimed that they had received no benefit from their apprenticeships (table 10).

Table 10 Main benefit received from undertaking a traditional trade apprenticeship, by completion status, 2019 (%)

	Completers	Non-completers
Employment benefits	75.8	42.9
Qualification/trade	39.9	1.8
Got a job	12.8	4.4
Gained extra skills for my job	11.5	17.1
Experience	4.0	15.8
Got a new job/changed my job	2.4	2.0
An increase in earnings	2.2	0.9
Good job prospects	1.4	0.3
Was able to set up or expand my own business	1.0	0.3
A promotion (or increased status at work)	0.7	0.2
Further study benefits	0.3	0.1
Got into further study	0.3	0.1
Personal benefits	15.7	27.1
Knowledge	7.2	13.6
Advanced my skills generally	4.0	7.8
Gained confidence	1.5	1.2
Self-satisfaction	1.3	0.8
Improved communication skills	0.8	1.4
Made new friends	0.5	1.9
Enabled me to travel and meet new people	0.2	0.2
Seen as a role model for others in the community	0.2	0.0
Enabled me to stay in the local area	0.1	0.2
Other*	6.5	12.3
All benefits	98.4	82.3
No benefits	1.7	17.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Note: *Other benefits are those not classified as being employment, further study or personal benefits.

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey, 2019 unpublished data.

The focus groups confirmed these findings. With respect to employment-related benefits, all of the apprentices in the focus groups were looking forward to completing their trade and gaining the qualification, since this would provide them with new opportunities in their current jobs and in the future.

While acknowledging some employment-related benefits, the apprentices in the focus groups tended to speak of benefits of a more personal nature, such as increasing self-esteem and confidence as a result of having gained new knowledge and skills, and then successfully applying that knowledge and skills. The social aspects of the workplace were also considered a benefit by many of the focus group participants.

Despite the stated benefits gained from undertaking a traditional trade apprenticeship, a number of negative aspects were identified. In 2019, over a quarter of traditional trade apprentices had witnessed bullying in the workplace. A higher proportion of non-completers (36.5%) observed bullying than did completers (22.8%). The proportions were also high for females and those in the food trades (table 11).

Table 11 Bullying observed in the workplace by various characteristics for completers and non-completers, traditional trade apprentices, 2019 (%)

	Completers	Non-completers	Total
Gender			
Males	20.6	32.7	24.1
Females	44.1	57.4	49.6
Age group			
18 to 19 years	18.6	31.8	29.4
20 to 24 years	22.4	38.2	26.6
25 to 44 years	24.4	40.8	27.7
45 years and over	17.1	17.4*	17.2
Occupation of traditional trade apprentices			
Motor mechanics, repairers and vehicle builders	22.8	26.3	24.1
Engineering trades	17.1	37.9*	21.6
Precision trades	17.1*	np	14.2*
Building	19.1	33.1	23.2
Electrotechnology and telecommunications	21.3	27.1	22.5
Food trades	36.1	55.2	43.6
Skilled animal and horticultural workers	19.6	29.2*	23.6
Other traditional trades	35.0	51.2	41.7
Observed bullying in the workplace	22.8	36.5	26.9

Note: *The estimate has a margin of error greater than or equal to 10% and therefore should be used with caution.

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019, unpublished data.

When apprentices in the focus groups discussed the worst aspects of their jobs, many spoke about the long hours they were expected to be at work, the early morning starts, and the routine and repetitiveness of many tasks they were expected to undertake. Some highlighted the pressure of having to get things right on the first occasion, and quickly. They also spoke of how the personalities of their bosses had an impact on whether or not they were reproached for doing things incorrectly and how the attitude of the boss affected their experience of work, these concerns being more apparent among the apprentice chefs.

Employment and earnings

In 2019, over 90% of traditional trade apprentices who completed their apprenticeships were employed after training, compared with about 75% of non-completers. Of these over half of apprenticeship completers and almost 14% of non-completers were working with the same employer with whom they had done their apprenticeship training (table 12).

Table 12 Employment outcomes for traditional trade apprentices by completion status, 2019 (%)

	Completers	Non-completers
Employed with same employer as apprenticeship	55.2	13.7
Motor mechanics, repairers and vehicle builders	54.1	17.1
Engineering trades	58.6	8.5
Precision trades	69.1*	np
Building	49.6	11.7
Electrotechnology and telecommunications	62.6	17.0
Food trades	50.9	12.4
Skilled animal and horticultural workers	56.3*	3.7
Other traditional trades	54.6	16.8

Note: * The estimate has a margin of error greater than or equal to 10% and therefore should be used with caution;
np = not published. NCVER does not report on estimates based on five or fewer respondents because the estimates are unreliable.
Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019, unpublished data.

In both 2010 and 2019, over 90% of employed completers found their training relevant to their current job (table 13). This was roughly double the proportion of employed non-completers in both 2010 and 2019.

Table 13 Relevance of training to current job for traditional trade apprentices, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)

	2010		2019	
	Completers	Non-completers	Completers	Non-completers
Found the training relevant to their current job	92.6	41.2	92.9	54.9

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.

Income earned

In 2019, traditional trade completers employed full-time in the last week of the apprenticeship received a median annual income of \$45 200 compared with \$31 100 for non-completers (table 14). After leaving their apprenticeship, this had increased to \$62 600 and \$43 800 (respectively).

Table 14 Median annual income for traditional trade apprentices, by completion status, 2019

	Completers	Non-completers
Of those employed full-time		
In last week of apprenticeship/traineeship (\$)	45 200	31 100
After apprenticeship/traineeship (as at 31st May 2019) (\$)	62 600	43 800

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019, unpublished data.

Post-apprenticeship studies

When asked if they had enrolled in further study after completing or leaving their traditional trade apprenticeship, around a fifth of completers and a third of non-completers reported that they had done so (table 15).

In 2010 and 2019, higher proportions of both completers and non-completers went on to further study with a TAFE institute than with other types of providers. A significant proportion of non-completers moved on to another apprenticeship in both 2010 and 2019 (table 15).

Table 15 Further studies undertaken by traditional trade apprentices after the apprenticeship training, by completion status (%)

	2010		2019	
	Completers	Non-completers	Completers	Non-completers
Enrolled in further study	19.5	35.4	22.4	30.4
Studying at university	0.9	2.5	2.0	3.1
Studying at TAFE	8.7	10.7	12.7	14.3
Studying at other provider	5.6	6.2	7.7	13.0
Further study is related to apprenticeship	na	na	18.1	11.8
Further study was another apprenticeship	6.4	20.8	4.1	14.9

Note: na – not applicable. Due to differences in question ordering and wording data are not comparable between 2019 and 2010.

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.

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Misko, J 2020, *Traditional trade apprenticeships: training activity, employer incentives and international practices*, NCVER, Adelaide.

Misko, J & Wibrow, B 2020, *Traditional trade apprenticeships: learnings from the field*, NCVER, Adelaide.

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Appendix A

Table A1 Traditional trade occupations by trade group

Occupation	Classification
321000 Automotive Electricians and Mechanics – nfd	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
321111 Automotive Electrician	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
321200 Motor Mechanics – nfd	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
321211 Motor Mechanic (General)	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
321212 Diesel Motor Mechanic	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
321213 Motorcycle Mechanic	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
321214 Small Engine Mechanic	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
322000 Fabrication Engineering Trades Workers – nfd	Engineering Trades
322113 Farrier	Engineering Trades
322211 Sheetmetal Trades Worker	Engineering Trades
322300 Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers – nfd	Engineering Trades
322311 Metal Fabricator	Engineering Trades
323000 Mechanical Engineering Trades Workers – nfd	Engineering Trades
323100 Aircraft Maintenance Engineers – nfd	Engineering Trades
323111 Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Avionics)	Engineering Trades
323112 Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Mechanical)	Engineering Trades
323113 Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Structures)	Engineering Trades
323211 Fitter (General)	Engineering Trades
323215 Textile, Clothing and Footwear Mechanic	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
323299 Metal Fitters and Machinists nec	Engineering Trades
323311 Engraver	Precision Trades
323313 Locksmith	Precision Trades
323314 Precision Instrument Maker and Repairer	Precision Trades
323315 Saw Doctor	Precision Trades
323316 Watch and Clock Maker and Repairer	Precision Trades
324111 Panelbeater	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
324211 Vehicle Body Builder	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
324212 Vehicle Trimmer	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
324311 Vehicle Painter	Motor Mechanics, Repairers and Vehicle Builders
330000 Construction Trades Workers – nfd	Building
331111 Bricklayer	Building
331112 Stonemason	Building
331200 Carpenters and Joiners – nfd	Building
331211 Carpenter and Joiner	Building
331212 Carpenter	Building
331213 Joiner	Building
332000 Floor Finishers and Painting Trades Workers – nfd	Building
332111 Floor Finisher	Building
332211 Painting Trades Worker	Building
333111 Glazier	Building
333200 Plasterers – nfd	Building
333211 Fibrous Plasterer	Building

Occupation	Classification
333212 Solid Plasterer	Building
333311 Roof Tiler	Building
333411 Wall and Floor Tiler	Building
334000 Plumbers – nfd	Building
334100 Plumbers – nfd	Building
334111 Plumber (General)	Building
334112 Airconditioning and Mechanical Services Plumber	Building
334114 Gasfitter	Building
334115 Roof Plumber	Building
340000 Electrotechnology and Telecommunications Trades Workers – nfd	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
341111 Electrician (General)	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
341112 Electrician (Special Class)	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
341113 Lift Mechanic	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342111 Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342200 Electrical Distribution Trades Workers – nfd	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342211 Electrical Linesworker	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342212 Technical Cable Jointer	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342311 Business Machine Mechanic	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342313 Electronic Equipment Trades Worker	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342314 Electronic Instrument Trades Worker (General)	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342315 Electronic Instrument Trades Worker (Special Class)	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342400 Telecommunications Trades Workers – nfd	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342411 Cabler (Data and Telecommunications)	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342412 Telecommunications Cable Jointer	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
342414 Telecommunications Technician	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications
351000 Food Trades Workers – nfd	Food Trades
351100 Bakers and Pastrycooks – nfd	Food Trades
351111 Baker	Food Trades
351112 Pastrycook	Food Trades
351211 Butcher or Smallgoods Maker	Food Trades
351311 Chef	Food Trades
351411 Cook	Food Trades
361112 Horse Trainer	Skilled Animal and Horticultural Workers
362200 Gardeners – nfd	Skilled Animal and Horticultural Workers
362211 Gardener (General)	Skilled Animal and Horticultural Workers
362212 Arborist	Skilled Animal and Horticultural Workers
362213 Landscape Gardener	Skilled Animal and Horticultural Workers
362411 Nurseryperson	Skilled Animal and Horticultural Workers
391111 Hairdresser	Other Traditional Trades
392000 Printing Trades Workers – nfd	Other Traditional Trades
392100 Print Finishers and Screen Printers – nfd	Other Traditional Trades
392111 Print Finisher	Other Traditional Trades
392112 Screen Printer	Other Traditional Trades
392211 Graphic Pre-press Trades Worker	Other Traditional Trades
392300 Printers – nfd	Other Traditional Trades
392311 Printing Machinist	Other Traditional Trades

Occupation	Classification
393114 Shoemaker	Other Traditional Trades
393213 Dressmaker or Tailor	Other Traditional Trades
393311 Upholsterer	Other Traditional Trades
394100 Cabinetmakers – nfd	Other Traditional Trades
394111 Cabinetmaker	Other Traditional Trades
399100 Boat Builders and Shipwrights – nfd	Other Traditional Trades
399111 Boat Builder and Repairer	Other Traditional Trades
399112 Shipwright	Other Traditional Trades
399411 Jeweller	Precision Trades
399611 Signwriter	Other Traditional Trades



Appendix B

Table B1 Traditional trade apprentices dissatisfied with aspects of the off-the-job training, by completion status, 2010 and 2019 (%)

	2010		2019	
	Completers	Non-completers	Completers	Non-completers
Off-the-job training overall	6.2	9.5	5.6	18.4
Relevance of skills to workplace	7.1	11.9	6.1	12.3
Fairness of the assessments of skills and knowledge	4.5	6.7	5.6	13.3
Quality of the training facilities and equipment	11.1	11.4	10.0	13.7
Quality of trainers/trainers/instructors	na	na	6.1	16.3
Skills learnt were up to date	na	na	7.7	11.6

Notes: na – not applicable. This question was not asked in the 2010 survey.

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.

Table B2 Dissatisfaction with employment aspects of the apprenticeship, traditional trade apprentices (%)

	2010		2019	
	Completers	Non-completers	Completers	Non-completers
Employment overall	3.9	22.7	6.8	26.1
Type of work	3.6	19.1	4.3	17.4
Working conditions	6.5	20.7	6.5	21.9
Pay	25.0	40.8	20.9	34.1
Hours of work	5.4	18.7	5.6	15.4
Supervision	6.5	24.4	8.0	22.6
Relationship with co-workers	2.7	17.1	4.7	17.9
Skills learnt on the job	3.5	19.2	4.1	13.7
Safety in the workplace	na	na	6.1	16.5

Notes: na – not applicable. This question was not asked in the 2010 survey.

Source: NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Destinations 2010; NCVER Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destinations Survey 2019; unpublished data.



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