



## ... SWP ... STRUCTURED WORK PLACEMENT ... SWP ...

To diffuse a common misunderstanding from the beginning, *Structured Work Placement (SWP) is NOT Work Experience.*

They are however similar in operation. Both involve the generosity of a business to host a student or course participant for a nominated period of time (usually one week or one day per week for a defined period). And, it is fair to say that both provide the participant with the opportunity to become involved in a workplace and learn.

The basic difference between Structured Work Placement and Work Experience is that participants on SWP are using the opportunity as part of a Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) accredited training programme (usually referred to as VET (Vocational Education and Training)) and will be required to demonstrate certain competencies with skills through the tasks they undertake on the job or associated theoretical knowledge. The on-job supervisor or the course trainer will be required to acknowledge the acquisition of tasks through signing a log book. On the other hand Work Experience is commonly undertaken by most secondary school students as part of the Work Education curriculum (usually Year 10 and/or Year 11) or stand alone Work Experience opportunities which schools will promote. Usually this means that the student has little or no assumed knowledge or skills and therefore the learning taking place on the job is predominantly targeted to routine tasks and observation.

### **SO HOW WILL HOSTING AN SWP BENEFIT MY BUSINESS?**

Hosting a student, whether on SWP or Work Experience can be a rewarding experience for all provided that the expectations are mutual

#### ⇒ **Enthusiasm and Demonstrated Interest**

An SWL participant comes to your business with a demonstrated interest in the industry you are involved in as proven through their course selection. Their enthusiasm therefore is usually guaranteed!

#### ⇒ **Productivity**

It is assumed that the participant will have knowledge and skills acquired through the course they are currently studying. It is therefore quite likely, dependent on their level of competency, that you will find someone who is productive for your business dependent on the tasks provided.

#### ⇒ **Offers Leadership / Supervisory Opportunities to Existing Employees**

In an environment where you may be considering taking on a junior or new member to your team, hosting an SWL participant may be an ideal way to assist existing staff to develop supervisory skills.

#### ⇒ **Potential New Team Members**

SWP is always a good opportunity to assess the skill level and attitude of a potential employee. It would be wrong to generalise and indicate that all SWL participants are committed to completion of SACE Stage 2; there are certainly many who are undertaking the VET course in order to prepare for an opportunity in the workforce as soon as possible. Whether it be now, or for the future; you may well engage with the ideal person for your business.

#### ⇒ **Links with the School and Local Community**

Hosting a Structured Workplacement participant is just one of the many ways in which links can be fostered with the community and schools. It is definitely a worthwhile way of helping schools and students keep in touch with a realistic and current understanding of employer expectations. While it requires your contribution through time and effort, there may be rebounding effects such as acknowledgement in school magazines and articles through your Local Community Partnership (LCP). Dependent on the type of business you have, 'lifting' your profile may not necessarily seem important in the local community, however it is often favourable to point out the 'in kind' support you give in applications for tender and grants - not to mention the 'word of mouth' networks!