



Women in Welding: Carley Attard

Having finished her apprenticeship last year and earned a Certificate III in Engineering at Chisholm Institute, Carley Attard is a Boilermaker and Leading Hand at Nuform Steel Fabrications in Melbourne. Carley was recently announced as the winner of the Master Builders Victoria 2021 State Apprentice of the Year. Carley answered some questions about her career in welding so far.

Can you describe your job?

I'm a welder at Nuform Steel Fabrications in Bayswater, which is a steel fabrication company that works on a wide range of projects. We work on everything from architectural steel to structural steel. Some of our recent jobs have included structural steel for a new council building in Lilydale, and installation of a glass channel for a restaurant and yoga studio.

What inspired you to choose a career in welding?

I actually just fell into a career in welding. I was working at a supermarket and wanted a change. There is a very large industrial area near where I live, so I started walking around the area, handing out CVs. I walked into Nuform Steel and was hired on the spot. At the time, I didn't know what a welder was. I've always liked doing things with my hands though, so it was a perfect fit. It actually wasn't until I started doing my trade and my apprenticeship that I found out that a lot of my family were fitters and turners.

Why do you think women should consider a career in welding?

I think women should consider a career in welding because there are so many options. In my job, we do everything. But you can specialise in aluminum welding, or TIG or MIG, or whatever it is that you enjoy. There is always another choice. Plus, Australia is always going to need welders—there will always be jobs around.

Do you have any advice for women considering a career in welding?

My advice for women considering a career in welding is just give it a go...and tie your hair back!

A lot of women think you need to be a big strong guy who can lift heavy things to be a welder. That's just not the case these days. We have machines that lift for us, and take care of all that manual labour. Also, the guys that you'll work with will all help you—the industry is pretty accepting these days.

A career in welding is definitely not something to shy away from just because you're female. Look at me: not only am I a boilermaker, I'm the Leading Hand.

Have you found working in a traditionally male-dominated industry difficult? If so, how have you overcome any challenges?

There are always going to be some challenges, like any job. I've had people take tools out of my hand and say I won't be able to do the job.

But, the company I work for is great and really supportive. I think you just need to get on with it and do the job. Hold your head high and do your best work. I'm confident in myself, and I know what I'm doing. People quickly come to realise that you know how to do the job.

What is the most interesting project you have worked on?

The first job that I was Leading Hand on is the

most interesting project I've worked on so far. This was the new Local Council building at Lilydale. We fabricated the steel in the workshop and then installed it onsite. So I had the opportunity to see the entire job from start to finish. Lilydale is actually my Local Council, so I drive past the building every day now. I can tell my kids, I helped build that.

Who has inspired you professionally?

My foreman in the Nuform Steel workshop, Steve, has inspired me. He has taught me so much. The way he does things is so methodical—nothing bothers him. Something will go wrong in the workshop and I'll be worried about how to fix it. Steve stays completely calm, and shows me another way to get the outcome we need.

What do you believe is the biggest challenge for the industry at the moment?

I think the biggest challenge for the industry is that there aren't enough people doing welding apprenticeships. We don't have the skills in Australia. There's so much work to be done but we just don't have the skilled, experienced people to do it.

The school and training system does not support apprentices enough. It's all competency-based training, without the hands-on learning that you need. You might know how to build something like a set of stairs in theory, but it's completely different once you get out on the workshop floor.

What do you believe is the biggest opportunity for the industry at the moment?

There are lots of opportunities for the welding industry. There is always room for improvement in everything. One of the biggest opportunities is encouraging more women to join the trade. Now that it's becoming more acceptable for women to become welders, there is a huge untapped percentage of the population that might be interested in becoming a welder. There are underutilised skills there that the industry should make the most of.



Master Builders Victoria State Apprentice of the Year

Carley Attard was announced as the winner of the 2021 Master Builders Victoria State Apprentice of the Year Award in May 2021 at a gala celebration held at Marvel Stadium.

The Award judges said they were impressed by Carley's strong sense of initiative after she entered the industry by approaching various employers in her area in her search for an apprenticeship. Carley was also commended for her creativity and passion for the process of building, not just the result.

During the interview process, Carley expressed her nervousness about initially starting a trade. However, now a fully qualified Fabrication Engineer, Carley believes anyone in her position should just 'give it a go.'

"I've pushed myself harder during this apprenticeship than anything else in my life."

"I was scared, but now I couldn't see myself doing anything else," Ms Attard said.

Master Builders Victoria CEO, Rebecca Casson, said the win was a fantastic achievement and proof that there is a place for women in the building and construction industry to develop successful and rewarding careers.

"We know that women – when given the opportunity – thrive in our industry, and we know their workplaces benefit too," said Casson.

"Carley's win is a testament to her ability as a young woman to tread her own path and follow her dreams even when they weren't presented to her as a first choice."

"A career in the building and construction industry is for everyone, and I encourage anyone looking for work to consider it," said Casson.

