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Training our youth in vital work skills

Guess which organisation employs 61 trainees, apprentices and cadets in areas as vast as communication, electrical services and water services?

Shoalhaven City Council has a long standing commitment to employing trainees, apprentices and cadets in each of its Groups to ensure that Council continues to offer training and employment for young citizens in the city and also to ensure that the wealth of talented people do not have to leave the city as an option for work.

ShoalTech, one of Council's business units providing communication and electrical services, has recently employed three young apprentices. The three local people began work in January 2011 and will continue with Council for the duration of their four-year apprenticeships.

ShoalTech Manager Brian Shearing said the apprentices – Chris Howcroft, 19, Erik Pasfield, 19, and Jake Albert, 18 – will all be employed in each facet of ShoalTech's work.

Chris, from Mollymook, and Erik, from Bomaderry, will begin as Apprentice Electricians with Council. Both Chris and Erik will be completing the Electrotechnology Electrician course at TAFE Illawarra, in Bomaderry. Jake, from West Nowra, will be undertaking the Electronics and Communication course at TAFE Illawarra.

The apprenticeships are for four years and will be completed in January 2015.

“Chris and Erik will be involved in a range of electrical work,” Mr Shearing said. “They will assist in carrying out installation, repairs and maintenance on sports field and car park lighting, leisure centres, commercial building light and power, emergency lighting, testing and tagging of electrical items, and complex industrial controls within Shoalhaven Water. Jake will be assisting with installation repairs and maintenance of two-way radio base stations and portable radio systems, security systems, CCTV systems, phone systems and communication tower work.”

Mr Shearing said that while ShoalTech provides the communication and electrical functions exclusively to Council. “We also provide electronic services to other government bodies like National Parks, Rural Fire Services, marine rescue and some private organisations like bus and taxi companies.”

Council's Assistant General Manager Rob Donaldson said Council is committed to providing apprenticeships and traineeships in all its groups.

“Currently in our two biggest groups, Shoalhaven Water and City Services and Operations, we have 11 and nine trainees respectively,” Mr Donaldson said. “Council is looking to have more than five percent of its workforce being apprentices, trainees or cadets. We are keen to provide employment opportunities for young people, provide opportunities for the unemployed, and develop local skills.

“Training young people is vital to Council's operations in the city and also helps to grow a pool of experienced and trained people in the trades and skills that Council requires in its day to day operations.”

Photo caption: Acting General Manager Rob Donaldson with Chris Howcroft, 19, Erik Pasfield, 19, and Jake Albert, 18 – new apprentices with Shoalhaven City Council’s ShoalTech business unit.

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