

ROSA, APPRENTICE CARPENTER

Rosa first became interested in carpentry during her Higher School Certificate (HSC) but it wasn't until after a few years spent travelling that she enrolled in a carpentry apprenticeship at TAFE.

Rosa secured an apprenticeship with a building company specialising in restoring heritage buildings before classes started. She said in the beginning, getting an apprenticeship wasn't hard but it wasn't easy either.

"Prospective employers told me they needed to see me 'on the tools' first, before they'd take me on.

"I was sure they weren't saying that to guys in my position so I approached the Master Builder's Association and I found my apprenticeship through them," she said.

Like most trade students, Rosa attends TAFE classes one day a week and works as an apprentice carpenter the rest of the week.

Rosa said she is thankful for her teacher's approach and the positive effect it has on her and her classmates' learning process.

Rosa said that her colleagues are used to having a woman on site as her boss previously employed a female carpenter.

"My colleagues aren't shocked. With sub-contractors it can be different. They are more likely to question what you are doing on site. At first they don't think you're a carpenter so they're also more likely to check your skills are up to scratch," she said.

Rosa advises other young women still in high school and considering a trade as a career, to do the HSC TAFE course in carpentry as she did.

"Don't shut the door to the idea of using your HSC to go forward career wise, as the HSC TAFE course counts as credits when you start your TAFE apprenticeship," Rosa said.

With two more years of TAFE study ahead of her Rosa said she sees herself working and travelling. She feels lucky she has a career that can take her anywhere.

Did you know? Did you know? The majority of carpenters are employed on housing projects, construction and civil engineering projects, and for maintenance in large factories, hospitals, institutions and private homes*



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Our teacher works in the industry and has a lot of knowledge. If you are interested as a student he's open to sharing his knowledge and he'll reward those who want to learn. That's what you want in a teacher. ”

Rosa



For further information about **Girls in Trades** go to

www.women.nsw.gov.au

*Source: <http://www.jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au/occupation/Carpenter/NSW>



LUCY, APPRENTICE CARPENTER

For Lucy it was a gap year spent in South America that led her to enrol in carpentry at North Sydney TAFE.

"I originally applied to do architecture but during my gap year I became interested in the building projects being done by organisations like Habitat for Humanity," said Lucy.

Lucy is in her final month of completing her apprenticeship, which for the last three years has meant attending TAFE one day a week and completing her apprenticeship.

"It wasn't an easy start," she said, "I didn't have the skills like the guys to just get started with my practical work.

"I hadn't grown up helping dad fix things in the shed or studied woodwork at school so my teacher was really supportive in letting me take the time I needed, to get a feel for the hands on work," she said.

Lucy said her TAFE teachers and their teaching methods were valuable to her learning.

"I had a whole day to build something so you really start to see your skills developing and you're given time to correct mistakes. You have your teachers to show you other ways to do things too," she said.

For Lucy, as a woman turning up to work at a construction site there is never a day that goes by without a colleague or client asking what she is doing on site.

"It's never changed, I always have to explain why I am there. People can't process it as they can't understand why I am not doing an office job, but once I explain what I do and why I love my job, they become more supportive," she said.

Lucy advises that other women looking to start a trade in carpentry should put together a resume and approach as many prospective employers as they can. They should also consider an apprenticeship with a small builder rather than with a company.

After she completes her apprenticeship, Lucy plans to be involved in an exchange program in South America where she'll be involved in the very building projects that stirred her initial decision to become a carpenter.

Did you know? Did you know?
In 2011, women made up 0.7% of carpenters in NSW*



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I think it's a lot easier working for small builders, there is time to develop a relationship with your colleagues, they're able to show you new skills and support your learning.

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Lucy



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*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011



FLAVIA, CARPENTER AND JOINER

Flavia came to Australia with her family after a number of years travelling between her home in Brazil and the UK where she gained her qualification in carpentry.

Arriving in Sydney, after first living in Brisbane, Flavia found work as a sub-contractor cabinet maker and joiner for a labour hire company.

"I've found Sydney more open to having women in the industry and I feel more appreciated. It's been amazing as it has opened up a lot of doors I don't think would have otherwise been open to me," she said.

For Flavia working as a carpenter continues to be rewarding and with more than 15 years experience in carpentry and woodwork she says the best part of her job is the creative side of it.

Flavia's advice for women starting out in their trade is straight forward; work hard and know what you want.

"It's important to know what works for you and what you want when considering work offers," she said.

Flavia believes completing a trade qualification can be very rewarding and that it's never too late to learn something new.

This year Flavia has been working with Habitat for Humanity, realising her long term goal of travelling and teaching carpentry and woodwork skills to people in impoverished communities.

Already accomplished in carpentry, upholstery, special paint effects and restoration, Flavia is planning to take on a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and a course in building.

Did you know? Did you know?
Many carpenters specialise in areas such as framing, fixing or formwork*



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Having a trade means you have a job that can take you anywhere and even if you're not going to do it forever. It's a skill you carry for life. ”

Flavia



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* Source: <http://www.jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au/occupation/Carpenter/NSW>



FI, PAINTER AND DECORATOR

Fi started her trade in painting and decorating as a young mum when she decided to join her partner in the family business. She said the decision was easy as her background was already in art, with a degree in three dimensional design, and joining the family business would increase her family's financial security.

"In the beginning I'd go to work with my partner two days a week on site and the rest of the time I'd be with the kids and looking after the business from home. When my youngest went to primary school my hours on the tools increased until I was working full-time."

Today with her children in their twenties, Fi has found her niche, teaching Painting and Decorating at Wollongong TAFE.

"I'm surprised at how much I enjoy teaching. I still paint and decorate but that is more of a side project. For me it's about teaching," she said.

Fi said she enjoys being a teacher when she is out on the road visiting TAFE campuses and organisations that support her role as founder of Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen, a support group that brings together women working in a range of trades.

"I love seeing other women doing a trade that doesn't fit this image we have created as a society. I'm constantly trying to change people's perceptions of what we women can do by encouraging them to get involved in a trade," Fi said.

Fi said women should not be deterred from seeking out a trade and that the key was to approach securing an apprenticeship like you would any other job opportunity.

"As a teacher I love visiting apprenticeship employers, it's a great joy for me to see the high calibre of both male and female tradespeople and to see everyone working together," she said.

"Encouraging women to get into non-traditional trades is not about women coming in to the trade and working better than the men or taking their jobs, rather it's about encouraging women to do the very best job they can in the right trade for them," she said.

Did you know? Did you know?
In 2011, women made up 2.9% of painting tradespeople in NSW*



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My advice is to be prepared, be resilient and keep chasing people. It's no different to finding any job, use your contacts and have initiative.”

Fi



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www.women.nsw.gov.au

*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011



JESSICA, APPRENTICE PLUMBER

At first Jessica wasn't sure if starting an apprenticeship in plumbing was the best choice of trade for her so her plan was to complete her first year and see how she liked it.

With encouragement from her two carpenter brothers as well as her parents, Jessica has completed her first year of study and will continue to work as a plumber's apprentice on top of studying one day a week at TAFE.

Jessica says she still raises eyebrows when turning up to work sites but is fortunate to have a small and supportive team of colleagues to work with.

"At first it was always a surprise to the guys but once I got into the work and they could see what I could do, their response changed.

"Now they are all really encouraging and it's a nice feeling to know that they respect me and let me get on with the job," she said.

Jessica's advice for other women considering a trade is for them to "just go for it" and it's this attitude that has allowed Jessica to arrive at where she is now.

"It may not be easy at first," explains Jessica, "because the biggest hurdle in pursuing a trade is getting your foot in the door."

For Jessica being able to create her own opportunities was important.

"I got started by having initiative. I went and got my steel cap boots, hard hat and Occupational Health and Safety card so that I didn't give anyone a reason to say no when it came to offering me an apprenticeship," she said.

"It's really about getting involved and doing what you are passionate about and showing others what you can do," she said.

Having completed her first year of TAFE studies with 18 months to go Jessica says she looks forward to the possibilities her career holds in the future.

"I'd like to get out there and work for myself. I've chosen this career as I like the flexibility it provides and the fact that my work can take me anywhere," said Jessica.

Did you know? **Did you know?**
In 2011, women made up 0.9% of plumbers in NSW *



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“

If a trade is something you really want to do there's no reason you can't pursue it. ”

Jessica



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*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011

