

SOUTH WEST WOMEN IN TRADES & TECH

Highlighting females from South West Victoria in careers in trades and technology, to complement the Department of Education's 2025 Trades and Tech Fit Expo



NEIL PORTER
LEGACY
COMMUNITY FOR CAREERS

Neil Porter Legacy

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About Us

The Neil Porter Legacy (NPL) is a local not-for-profit facilitating careers education and experiences, empowering students to make informed career-based decisions. We work in partnership with secondary schools and businesses to include careers in all areas of the curriculum, in memory of a popular teacher who guided many students into rewarding careers. Through NPL programs, students are exposed to a variety of industries as part of secondary school classes, enabling them to experience practical uses of their learning and to see how their interests and school learning can be used in a career.

When we heard about the first Trades and Tech Fit Expo, we recognised it as an opportunity that students from our region wouldn't have access to, due to travel and cost barriers. We decided to do something about it. Since our first trip to the inaugural expo, the Department of Education now funds our travel to the expo and offers the same opportunity to all regions across Victoria. We're very proud that our actions led to state-wide changes that provide opportunities to thousands of regional students annually. This booklet contains profiles of local women doing great things in trades and technology careers. We hope it inspires female students to achieve great things, just like the women featured and many others working across our region.

2024 Achievements

- **2497 students** from **18 schools** participated in NPL programs
- **380 business** engagements with students
- **7852 hours** of individual career education and experiences delivered

Join Us

Parents, students, teachers, industry members, anyone ... get involved!

Sign up for updates on the NPL homepage: neilporterlegacy.com.au



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Alyssa Geurts

3rd Year Apprentice Service Technician
Brandt Ballarat



Did you always see yourself working in the agriculture industry?

Not at first. In school I wanted to be a paramedic as everyone else was planning on going to university and I thought that's what I had to do too. But growing up in the agriculture industry, I followed my heart and decided I wanted a career in agriculture. It was the best decision I've made. If I went back in time, I would do it all again.

What was your pathway into your current role?

After high school, I attended Longerenong Agricultural College where I completed a Certificate 2 in Agriculture. That gave me opportunities to do work placements all over Australia working as a farmhand, driving machinery and working with stock. After I graduated, I worked on a cattle feedlot in Northern NSW and a cattle station in Northern WA.

After that I returned home to Victoria and operated machinery during seeding and harvest. In October 2022, I started looking for full time work and found Brandt were hiring service technician apprentices. I applied knowing this qualification would get me further in life. Seeing how these machines actually work, I got so good at operating them that now I can fix them myself. In November 2022, I started my apprenticeship. I've had never-ending support from everyone. I've learnt so much and I've never doubted my capabilities or whether I belong here.

To this day, I'm doing well with this apprenticeship, and I've learnt if I give it my all and try my best, I will keep excelling and be seen just as equally as everyone else.

What does a day in your profession look like?

I have my own tools in a work ute and usually go out on-site to work on machines, however every day for me is different. I could be doing simple engine work or full services on tractors. I could be diagnosing electrical and mechanical issues or I could be replacing broken parts. I love being able to do something different every day, I learn so much from it.

What are you most passionate about in your work?

Feeling like I have an important role in this workplace. I love the satisfaction of knowing I'm capable of fixing machines and keeping farmers going.

What are some of the key challenges you face in your work?

Sometimes my strength can be a downfall, as well as being a female in a male-dominated industry. But I've learnt to still give everything my best and never give up. I've got good support, which I think is important to have. Other technicians will help me whenever needed, while also teaching me new tips and tricks.

What's your message for attendees of the Trades and Tech Fit Expo?

It doesn't hurt to push yourself out of your comfort zone and try new things. At the end of the day, if it's not for you, at least you can say you've tried. Then you can move onto the next best thing until you've found a job you're passionate about.

Careers with Brandt

Brandt's values are quality, innovation, commitment and customer focus. They give voice to their dedication to doing things right and doing the right things for all of their stakeholders through their corporate tagline; Powerful Value. Delivered. Rewarding roles with Brandt include:

- Service Technician
- Foreman
- Small Engine Technician
- Labourer
- Precision Technology Specialist
- Field Parts Operations
- Sales Consultant: Parts and Services
- Sales Manager
- Parts Person

Check out the careers section of their website at:

<https://more.brandt.ca/au/john-deere/jobs/#?country=Australia>





Bindi Gove

*Head of External Affairs
Amplitude energy*

Did you always see yourself working in the gas industry?

Goodness no, I thought I was going to work for the World Tourism Organisation based in Spain, and I would be advising nations on sustainable tourism.

What was your pathway into your current role?

I became a Chief of Staff to a Senior Cabinet Minister in the Rudd/Gillard Government and when I stepped down, I got a phone call from BHP which started my career in the gas industry.

What does a day in your profession look like?

Reading Government policy, providing advice to my CEO in her capacity as not only CEO of our company but a Board member of our Industry Board. I handle media, update our website and liaise with community partners and handle any public facing matters associated with our company.

What are you most passionate about regarding your work?

Supplying gas to the Victorian community is a big responsibility; hospitals need gas, dairy and meat processors need gas, ice cream producers need gas. You can't have bricks or glass or steel without gas. Gas is an important commodity and it gets me out of bed helping people understand the important role of gas in our community and I spend time dispelling some myths about it.

What are some of the key challenges you face in your work?

I have a very diverse role and getting across all the issues in one day can be tricky- hence I'm responding to an email at 10pm!!

What's your message for the attendees of the Trades and Tech Fit Expo?

Be curious about a future career, don't rule anything in or out. Ask lots of questions. Be prepared to surprise yourself.

Careers with Amplitude Energy

Amplitude Energy offers their people the opportunity to make real impact to Australia's energy future by harnessing their capabilities and interests to drive business results. Here are some of the exciting roles they have:

- Maintenance Technician
- Health and Wellbeing Advisor
- Mechanical and Piping Engineer
- Electrical, Controls and Instrument Engineer
- Operations Superintendent
- Senior Production Technician
- Environment and Approvals Advisor
- Wells Manager
- Data Analyst
- Mechanical Fitter
- Welder
- Environmental Practitioner

Check out the careers section of their website at:

<https://amplitudeenergy.com.au/work-with-us/careers>





DemoDAIRY

Foundation

Chloe Brown

*Dairy Farmer, Board Member
DemoDAIRY Foundation*

Did you always see yourself working in the dairy industry?

Absolutely not. At school I was pushed into science and had limited exposure to farming as a career path. My dad worked with beef and sheep and my sister did a dairy farming apprenticeship, which I thought was crazy at the time. I never imagined I'd end up on a farm. But then I fell in love with a dairy farmer and through that I discovered a real career in dairy. Now we run 200 Jersey cows on 330 acres, leasing the land from my husband's parents. It's just the two of us doing all the work, with help from contractors for specific tasks like spreading fertiliser.

What was your pathway into your current role?

I started four different university degrees: biomedical science, nursing, health science and architecture. None of them felt right. Meanwhile, I was working on the farm and eventually realised that's where I wanted to be. I completed a Diploma of Agriculture, specialising in dairy. It gave me the hands-on and business knowledge I needed to feel confident in the industry.

What does a day in your profession look like?

Incredibly varied. There isn't a standard day and that's a huge part of what I love about being in dairy. Although each day I wake up and head to the dairy, the daily tasks change depending on the season. Some days I'm only milking cows, at other times of the year I'm raising calves and ensuring cows transition properly into the herd. Often I am spending time in the tractor feeding cows, sowing seed, or harvesting pastures. And across the months and year I spend time in the office, paying bills and working on the business. No two days are ever the same.

What are you most passionate about in your work?

The flexibility of farm life, working alongside my family, and being able to use both my brain and hands every day. I get to watch beautiful sunrises, see healthy cows producing nutritious milk, and know that what we do helps sustain our land long-term. I love that I can involve my kids, and every day I learn or improve something.

What are some of the key challenges you face in your work?

Managing risk, especially around cash flow and climate unpredictability. Making sure the cows are well-fed and our business remains viable is a constant juggle. It's hard to invest in things like solar panels when we're just trying to cover feed costs. When times are tough, it's harder to innovate or plan ahead, but that's also what makes dairy exciting. The complexity keeps me motivated.

What's your message for students attending the Trades and Tech Fit Expo?

You don't need to have all the answers now. In fact, if you think you do, you're probably wrong. Be curious. Say yes to the things that feel right for you, not what others expect. Keep opening doors, you might be surprised where you end up.

Careers in the Dairy Industry

The South-West Victorian Dairy Industry offers a chance to be part of a thriving, dynamic community while learning valuable skills and building a career. Many roles exist within the industry, including:

- Farm Manager
- Calf Rearer
- Harvesting Operator
- Animal Husbandry Technician
- Stock and Station Agent
- Dairy Technician
- Agronomist
- Agricultural Scientist
- Farmer
- Milk Supply Officer

For more information on careers in the dairy industry, check out the DemoDAIRY Foundation website: <https://www.demodairy.com.au/>



Sara Church

*Coordinator, Land & Asset Management
Acciona Energia*

Did you always see yourself working in the renewable energy industry?

Not at all. I was like a lot of girls and saw myself working in the beauty or medical industry. Working in a trade didn't really cross my mind.

What was your pathway into your current role?

I worked full-time in the pharmaceutical industry at the end of Year 11 and worked there for 13 years (in both community & hospital settings) on and off while I started my family. I then worked as a logistics and procurement officer for a local stockfeed company for 6 years.

A family separation and relocation led me into working with Acciona on a wind farm construction site close to my new home. I was in this role for the last 4 years and recently received a promotion into a new role in a brand new department of Acciona. I'm currently in this role and loving it.

What does a day in your profession look like?

My day begins by checking emails and planning my workload around meetings and deadlines that must be met. My work is based at home for administration type tasks and also on location at any of our Victorian based wind farms. From one day to the next I could be discussing work with contractors, ensuring host landowners are well looked after, working through compliance obligations with local council or coordinating with site based staff for upcoming works. In the past my job would also involve working at site alongside other employees to ensure safe processes and smooth operation of a functioning wind farm site.

What are you most passionate about regarding your work?

I love working with people. I love that I get to problem solve and create solutions to things that aren't so straight forward so that everyone, no matter what contribution they make, gets to have a positive experience. Every day is different and every day I get to work towards making the world a better place.

What are some of the key challenges you face in your work?

There are plenty of challenges that I face every day. Some are simple and can be fixed easily while others can take a period of time. Sometimes that involves developing new procedures and justification for why the old one wasn't working or could be done better. Some of the people I work with have been doing these jobs for a very long time and are resistant to change. For example; generational farmers, long term construction workers and expert trades people. Unfortunately, even people of different genders or cultural beliefs can create challenges that have to be worked through.

What's your message for attendees of the Trades and Tech Fit Expo?

Don't sell yourself short. If something sparks your interest give it a go! You never know where your life will lead you and sometimes the path we end up on isn't the one we had in mind.

Careers with ACCIONA Energía

There are many roles that will be available throughout all stages of their projects. There is a large variety and here are some examples:

- Civil Engineer
- Concreter
- Ecologist
- Electrician
- First Nations Community Engagement
- Plant & Machinery Operator
- Project Developer
- Quality Coordinator
- Site Coordinator
- Turbine Technician

Check out the careers section of their website at:

<https://community.accionacom.au/careers>





Kasey Smith

*Apprentice Electrician (4th Year)
Bega Group in Koroit*



Did you always see yourself becoming an electrician?

I've always had an interest in trades but wasn't brave enough to give it a go when I was younger. When I decided to make a career change, I thought why not give it a go and see if I like it. If I hadn't given it a try, I never would have known and always wondered. I haven't regretted my decision once.

What was your pathway into becoming an electrician?

I studied for 4 years at Federation University, completing a degree in PE teaching with a minor in Humanities. I taught up in the North East for several years and then decided to take time off to have a family. When I chose to re-enter the workforce, I felt like a change. Teaching was going to be too difficult to manage as a single parent, so I thought I'd finally take the leap and give electrical a go. I first started in the pre-apprenticeship program at South West Tafe in Warrnambool and loved it. I had to work hard to find a full-time apprenticeship but persisted and picked one up with WestVic Staffing. I spent 6 months working with Wannon Water and then another 6 months working on the new construction at Lyndoch Living. I'm now at Bega in Koroit and have been here for 3 years.

What does a day in your profession look like?

There are 3 main areas of electrical: domestic, commercial and industrial (all are covered under the 1 apprenticeship - Cert 3 in Electrotechnology). At Bega I work in the industrial side of the trade which can mean that every day is different. It is also dependent on the amount of milk and cream the plant is processing. At the beginning of the day, we get a list of electrical breakdowns that need to be fixed immediately and that could be anything from a motor that needs to be disconnected, a sensor has stopped working or a power point has tripped out. If it's something that is part of the production process, for example the machine that packs out 250g or 500g blocks of butter, then it's time sensitive and needs to be resolved quickly as it holds up production. In quieter times we try to make improvements or repairs, for example replacing lights, installing new power points, or cabling for a new motor or valve.

What are you most passionate about in your work?

The variety of work is terrific. It's unpredictable but also mentally challenging. Working on the one site with the same people is also great. I like learning new things and this job provides that daily. There are still so many things to learn and improve on.

What are some of the key challenges you face in your work?

There is definitely a positive shift towards women in trades, but you still face individuals who aren't open to change. In a lot of ways there is less tolerance if you make a mistake and you have to reach a higher standard before you are acknowledged. However, there is no better feeling than when you pass those expectations and prove people wrong.

I'm lucky that I work in a great workplace where I don't face it daily.

Some of the other challenges (specifically relating to the industrial side) include: the sheer amount of knowledge you must have to do your job, you must not only know the electrical side but also the process side, such: How does the process work? How does the machine operate? What does normal look and sound like? You can't resolve the issue until you understand the process.

What's your message for students attending the Trades and Tech Fit Expo?

If you have a question, ask it. You'll be surrounded by people who have experience in something you're interested in so make the most of it by picking their brain. Ask questions ranging from the basics of "what does your average day look like?" to "what do you look for in an apprentice?". If you think you might be interested in something, find out more about it. You can't make an informed decision if you haven't explored all options properly.

Careers with Bega

There are a wide variety of interesting career paths at Bega Group. Roles include but not limited to:

- Automation Engineer
- Reliability Engineer
- Electrical Tradesperson
- Mechanical Tradesperson
- Network Engineers
- Continuous Improvement professionals
- Milk Supply Officers
- Production Operators
- Machine Operators
- Territory Managers

Check out their website for further information

<https://begagroup.com.au/careers>



As part of today's activities, we will be visiting the Melbourne offices of Origin Energy. At Origin, they're on a mission to show up for their customers, community and the planet – usefully. Origin provide their customers with energy solutions as well as solar, LPG and broadband. There's a lot that goes into powering homes and businesses including power generation, gas exploration and renewables. You can find out more by visiting their website: <https://www.originenergy.com.au/about/>

At Origin, you will have time to meet some of their employees in a small group setting. Some questions you may like to ask them are:

What types of problems, challenges or issues does Origin solve or address?

What types of jobs or occupations exist at Origin?

What are some of the new or exciting things happening at Origin or in your industry?

How did you get into this career and what steps did you take to get here?

What advice would you suggest for someone who wants to work in in your industry?

What is the best thing about working at Origin?

What do you wish you knew when you were at school?

Could you let us know some career challenges you've faced, and how you overcame them?

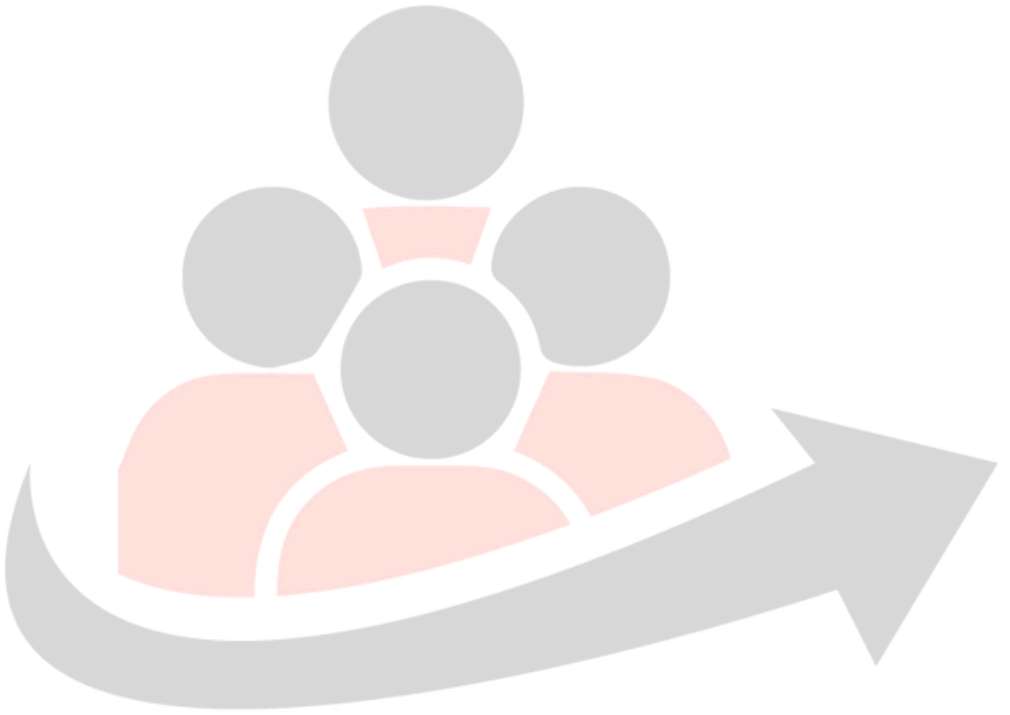
What does a typical day look like for you at Origin?

Are there any particular skills or qualifications that are especially valuable in your role or this industry?

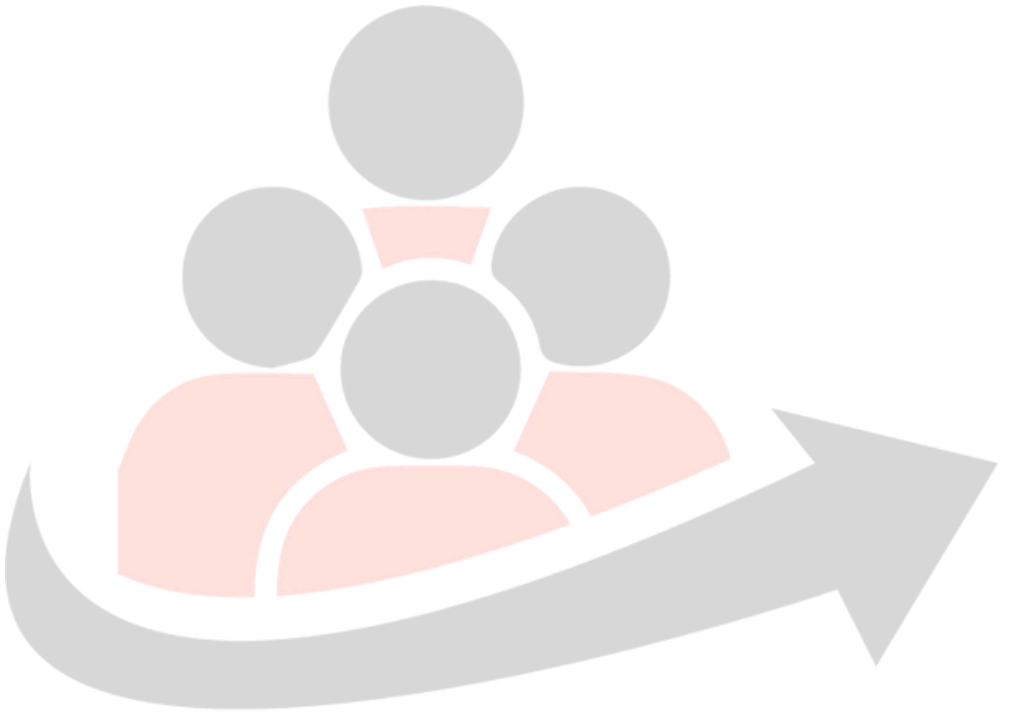
What's been one of your proudest achievements while working at Origin?

What skills or subjects should students focus on if they're interested in a career like yours?

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This booklet was compiled by the Neil Porter Legacy, with generous support from Origin Energy's Mortlake Battery Energy Storage System, Community Investment Program. All content is the responsibility of the NPL.

Our group's travel to the Trades and Tech Fit Expo was generously provided by the Department of Education.