

Passing on vital skills

THERE'S one thing you can't put a price on when it comes to working in construction, and that's experience

It's the reason that David Wernowski spends two days a week at the renovation project in Herbert Street, where he passes on his years of working as a tradie to the next generation.

As part of a partnership between Apprenticeships Queensland and TAFE Queensland, the home in Herbert Street in the heart of Sadlier's Crossing, is currently undergoing a massive renovation, with work progressing well despite the recent rain putting a dampener on some days.

It is hoped the house will be finished by early next year and ready to hit the market, where the sale of the home will finance a similar project in 2019 and 2020.

The new home is currently a three-bedroom, one-bathroom home. On completion, it will have two levels and will have an extra three bedrooms downstairs along with a big rumpus room, and the project is on track to be finished by the end of the year.

Fourteen school-based apprentices are out of the classroom and are learning all about their trade which many hope will lead them straight into a full-time job when they graduate. The renovation is giving over 50 students real time experience as they learn their trade.

David acts as a mentor to the young tradies, bringing his decades of experience to the project, as she splits his time between Herbert Street, working with Men's Shed in Bundamba and enjoying his retirement.

"I've been retired for five years, and originally for 18 years I spent time as a carpenter," Mr Wernowski said. "I think got pushed out in the early



1980's when interest rates hit 17.5% and the housing industry died.

"I applied to work for the railways and got in there in 1982, I went in as a carriage builder. I was working on guard's vans and the old wooden coaches which have now been decommissioned, then nine years working in fibre glass and came back to Ipswich when the Workshops Museum opened up, where I was a tour guide for a few years until retirement.

"Paul and Matt from Apprenticeships Queensland visited the Men's Shed and were looking for volunteers to work with the kids on the first project in Hill Street, North Ipswich, and I put my hand up. I do two or three days a week and I really enjoy it. It's good to pass my knowledge on to the next generation

of tradies, and I tell them all the time the secret is to try your best and things will work out for you."

David believes it is still a good industry to get into, and with Ipswich continuing to be the fastest growing spot in the nation, there is plenty of work out there for students keen to get into the construction industry.

"You can't teach cuts and measurements in a classroom, it's something you need to practice on the job. You never pick stuff like that up on the first go. The beauty of a career like this is that you're not sitting in an office all day, you're out in the elements, you feel free and you have no pressure.

"Seeing the end result in Hill Street gave me lots of pleasure, and this new project is much bigger.

Nothing is finished off, it's going to be a work in progress until the very end, and I can really see the potential in this house. At this stage it's a renovation, but when its finished you'll see the complete article and I think that they love having me around, I like the hours I do here.

"I'd say to anyone wanting to get into the industry to go in with your eyes open, be positive and try your best. I always tell them that a project is like a jigsaw puzzle. Every day you're doing the same thing, but you're doing it differently, as you're in various areas and working on different jobs."

You can follow the progress of the house in upcoming issues of the QT's Real Estate Guide every month, which is FREE with your paper every Saturday.

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