

EPPPTV Episode 6 Transcript

Liam (Host)

Hello, again. Here we are back on the beautiful Northern Rivers region of New South Wales for another episode of EPPP TV. Last episode, we looked at some of the great things which are happening in the world of agriculture. But that's not all that's going on around here.

In this episode, we're gonna look at some awesome careers in the tourism and hospitality industries. I absolutely love the North Coast of New South Wales. I was born and raised here. I started at the Wollongbar TAFE, and now, I work as a heavy vehicle mechanic in Lismore. So I can definitely say there are some great career opportunities in this part of the world.

That's enough about me. Let's get onto our episode. So to kick us off, I had a chat earlier with Damon McCarthy from Training Services, New South Wales to get the lowdown on what's happening in terms of jobs on the North Coast.

So Damon, thanks for joining us. Can you just tell me a little bit about yourself, and, and what your job entails?

Damon (Guest)

Yeah, so I'm a project officer for the Regional Industry Education Partnership program. The role's around connecting schools with industry.

Liam (Host)

What sort of area are you covering?

Damon (Guest)

Yeah, so my region's from Grafton in the south through to Tweed Heads on the Queensland border. There's a few schools in there, so not only do I cover public schools, there's also the Catholic and independent schools, as well.

Liam (Host)

Obviously, agriculture is not the only industry in this area. What other industries, would you see a lot of growth and change and strengthening?

Damon (Guest)

So we've got a strong health sector in the, in the region. We've also got construction. We've also, working in that, sort of, creative performing arts space. And then, obviously, tourism, hospitality has been strong for the North Coast, as well.

Liam (Host)

Yeah, sure. So if I was a student, how would I go about accessing this? What would you recommend?

Damon (Guest)

Normally, what would happen is the careers advisor or the vocational teacher would approach me and say, "I have this need." Or when I'm out talking to Industry, I expose that they've got some skill needs, and that the students or school kids could fill part of that need.

Liam (Host)

Sure, so we engage with their career advisors, and counselors, and just say, "Hey, I've heard about this. What can you do for me?"

Damon (Guest)

Yeah, It's just simply approaching the careers advisor saying "Look, I want, I'm wanting to work in this industry. Is there opportunities for work experience out there? I, you know, I might be interested in the school-based apprenticeship or traineeship." So it'd be about talking to them first. And then, normally, the careers advisor or this teacher would then make contact through to

me to go out and, sort of, source some industry or engage with industry around what opportunities there are.

Liam (Host)

That's awesome. Thanks very much for that.

Damon (Guest)

Damon: Yeah, no worries, thanks.

Liam (Host)

Our first stop of today is beautiful Alstonville, where we're meeting Christian, the manager of Trident Fish Bar and Grill, as well as Blake and Chelsea who are both completing SBATs at the popular eatery. Let's see what they've got to say.

Christian (Guest)

So my name is Christian. I run the The Trident Fish and Grill here in Alstonville. We're not just your average fish and chip shop. We're very community-based by, you know, supporting sporting events, local charities, and stuff like that. You know, I've just brought two new trainees on. We're pretty involved. 80% of our workforce is probably high school students from your local high schools in Alstonville here, or down in Ballina and Lismore.

Chelsea (Guest)

My name's Chelsea, and I am studying Hospitality Cert two at The Trident Fish and Grill and at Alstonville High. I'm currently in year 11, and I'm gonna go into year 12 doing my traineeship with Christian and my school. I chose to study Hospitality because I love, I like, I'm a people person, and I just love being around people. And it also have a really big interest in food. I came along my traineeship through my Work Studies teacher, and also my boss, Christian helped me set it up because I already worked here previously.

Blake (Guest)

My name's Blake. I am a year 11 student, currently at Alstonville High studying a Certificate two in Hospitality. I'm excited about Hospitality 'cause it's always been in my life since I was a young age with my uncle being a chef. But, you know, not every subject can set you up for where you wanna be in life. And I wanna, you know, cook and be a chef.

Christian (Guest)

I, myself, started as a school-based traineeship. You know, I was in year 10 when I started. I actually approached my careers advisor, and said to her that, that I wanted to start a school-based traineeship. She signed me up through one of our local businesses here in Alstonville. I grew up in the hospitality industry. My parents have had businesses all their life ever since we were kids. We grew up in it. My first job was, actually, at a local pizza shop in Alstonville. I started, actually, on the dishes, and worked my way up to store manager.

Blake (Guest)

You know, we were talking about it with my teacher, Ms. Wilson, for a while about trying to get me into a traineeship. And then when Toni came in, it was sort of a little easier 'cause it was right there, and we could start as soon as we could. So it was, sort of, pushed it to be on the easier side. And I was in my little corner, sort of like, I want to, but I can't. And then Chelsea being who she is, was like, "Yeah, Blake, go get him, and he'll talk about it. He'll love it."

Chelsea (Guest)

So I thought it'd be a good opportunity to, you know, study something that I really liked doing that can help me for my future, as well as earning my HSC all at the same time. To me, it just sounded like something that was perfect for me. And, you know, so you can do both, and it's a really good 50-50 way to achieve lots of things. Your school year advisor, your mentors, you know, sometimes your subject lecturers are teachers in them, like my Work Studies teacher. They really all help along the way. Your deputies, your principals, as much as they might seem, you know not approachable at the time, once they figure out your path and what you're willing to do and what you wanna do, it's really easy to just be like, "This is what I want for my life. This is what I'm

interested in. Could you please help me achieve that?" And they'll be there, and they'll help you. And that's awesome and relieving.

Blake (Guest)

With traineeships, the opportunities are always gonna be out there. It's just, whether you looked there, or if someone can, you know, give you a heads up and go talk to this person. They'll help you, and you'll be straight into a traineeship helping you with whatever you need. It's really good, you know. You, all you have to do is look under a few rocks, and you'll find your opportunity.

Christian (Guest)

My advice to anyone is approach your careers advisor or your, you know, trainee advisor, and they'll get you into it (laughs).

Liam (Host)

Earlier, I had the chance to catch up with Deborah Page-Thomas, the Head Teacher for Careers in the Ballina Cluster of Schools, and Karen Horne, the Career Advisor from Alstonville High School to find out about the great work that they're doing. Let's take a look at what they had to say. Deb and Karen, thanks for joining me. So Deborah, I'll start with you. Can you tell me about your role?

Deborah (Guest)

Sure, Liam. I work as the Head Teacher, Careers across five schools in the Northern Rivers area making that connection between the pilot initiatives of EPPP, and making sure that those communications liaise really closely with our careers advisors in the school that are, are the core people in making sure our young students are able to connect into those great opportunities.

Liam (Host)

Wow, sounds like you've got a very, pretty complex job going on there. And, so you've mentioned that, Karen, that you're the career advisor for Alstonville High. You wanna tell me a little bit about that role, and what that entails, day to day?

Karen (Guest)

Yeah. Yes, well, Liam, I've been there. This is my 22nd year, so I've been there for quite some time. So things probably change over the years, but more focus, more recently on vocational education, on, you know, TAFE Tasters, and things involving that. Also, university programs. Students were able to go into that. Work experience. So they've got continuous programs. So they're able to, actually, go out on work experience one day a week or for a block during the term. We also can offer programs at the school level, like the white card, RSA and RCG. So they're getting those qualifications at school. And then, that means they can go out into trade areas or hospitalities.

Liam (Host)

So what do you think is some of the challenges that as students in rural areas are facing?

Deborah (Guest)

One of the biggest factors that can be a barrier for young people accessing future training, part-time work, even E-vet studies, as part of their HSC, is transport. That can be really preventative of young people accessing employment opportunities.

Karen (Guest)

Well, at the school we can do things like, sort of, subsidizing buses and that, for transport, for students to go to TAFE, and those sort of things. So the different thing that's happened during COVID is we've had a number of students that were close to getting their license. And because of the current restrictions, they were put off, and not being able to go for it. So we wrote a letter of support to say how much they needed it. They lived out in the country. They needed it to be at school for their after-school classes, and they also needed it for employment. So that worked in really well. And they actually, I'm happy to say (chuckles), they actually both went for it, and got their license, so it was something that, you know, it was good to make them independent, and take that pressure off their parents.

Deborah (Guest)

A lot of value has come through the EPPP project in that our pilots are able to support with transport.

Liam (Host)

Liam: Yeah.

Deborah (Guest)

To make sure that students are not missing out too.

Liam (Host)

So, tell me about the school-based training mentors.

Deborah (Guest)

We've recently had Toni Bellos join our team. And Toni's the school-based traineeships and apprenticeship mentor. And she's working closely with students that are keen on combining paid work and vocational training with their HSC studies. She's also working out in the community to educate businesses around what a school-based traineeships and apprenticeship could look like for their business, and how they could participate in that program. And, as I think everybody would agree, it's a win for the employer, and it's a win for the school and the student. That great collaboration between a community being able to build a future workforce, but also give a young person opportunity to make their HSC very meaningful to their future pathway.

Liam (Host)

What great advice from Deb and Karen but that's what career advisors are for. It's their job to help students find the best career path for them, and make the right choices in school.

Next up, we're heading to beautiful Ballina to meet Anna, who works at the Ramada Hotel. Let's get into Anna's story.

Anna (Guest)

My name's Anna Podgorczyk. I'm the Social Media and Marketing Coordinator, and I also run events for Ramada Hotel and Suites, Ballina. It involves a bit of everything. It changes day to day, which I love.

The social media and marketing, I do some content creation for that. So that involves some photography, some videography, and then, I also manage the websites along with some reviews, replying, and then, any other graphic design or similarly, or anything that I get thrown at, which is nice.

So I've just been recently learning some new skills. I'm currently completing a diploma of Event Management through Destination New South Wales and Meetings and Events Australia. And in high school, I did actually complete a Certificate three in Live Media and Production and Events. And that was, kind of, the path that led me here, and here.

It's pretty amazing that I get to do this every day. In the North Coast, it's such a tourism hotspot. And at Ramada Hotel and Suites, I do feel like this is the bit of a hub, and that's really exciting. And being here, I get to connect with so many other tourism providers. We often run a lot of famils. So through Destination New South Wales, they're really proactive at connecting local businesses. And I think that's really amazing, being able to tie everybody in. And we work a little bit with just council and bouncing ideas that way. And again, with out of the blue adventures, just seeing everyone's passion for the tourism industry, and be able to link in with that.

Even though I do work here, I feel like I do work as a part of the community as a whole, which I think, that's really exciting. The most rewarding aspect of my job, it's just perhaps, a friendly smile after someone's had such a long day, and they just wanna come and just be comfortably welcomed into the hotel. Your three seconds of kindness and reaching out to someone could just change their whole day, which is pretty amazing. And I think that people come in here to make memories and to have experiences, and the fact that you can cultivate that further for someone, and change their whole experience is amazing. You don't have to move away to have, you know,

the job that you would like. You don't have to move to a capital city. It is right here, which is really nice. There's plenty of opportunity, as well. And that's becoming more and more apparent over the years. And if you just put yourself out there, and talk to the right people and make those connections, you'll be able to find those positions you can jump on into.

Liam (Host)

For our final segment, we're gonna have a chat with Michael Thurston. Michael is a general manager at Destination North Coast, and appropriately, I'm meeting him at the beautiful Lighthouse Beach to talk all things tourism.

Liam (Host)

Michael, thanks for joining us.

Michael (Guest)

My pleasure.

Liam (Host)

So tell me a bit about what's going on with tourism in the region at the moment.

Michael (Guest)

Michael: Well, it's a, it's recovered surprisingly well. Since interregional tourism re-opened on the June long weekend, we've seen really healthy numbers throughout the region. Lots of places' been running at capacity, which has been fantastic.

Liam (Host)

So are we seeing any interesting new developments or changes in the way that tourism's operating around here?

Michael (Guest)

Yeah, there's set to be a lot of changes, and especially, in the earlier part of the lockdowns and the, and the restrictions on travel. I think it's just made businesses look at how they operate, and maximize what they can, where they can, you know.

There's some great examples where restaurants delivering food packages and premade meals. We've had bars and restaurants delivering cocktails to people's homes. So thankfully, we're starting to see new businesses open up again. Nothing greatly out of the, out of the norm, but more food and beverage outlets. And, I guess, some more excursion providers who do offer that nature-based activity, bike, bike providers, and other kind of nature-based tours.

When you cater, traditionally, to an international marketplace, and then you're really catering to people who live within three or four hours of your product, you've really gotta change the proposition. You've gotta change your delivery. And you're gonna change the price point a lot of the time. So a lot of that adaptation has been required throughout.

Liam (Host)

Looking at the employment market, what types of jobs, do you see currently going in the industry at the moment?

Michael (Guest)

Well, the tourism industry offers such a diverse and wide range of employment opportunities. You've got all the core, kind of, functional jobs. You have an annual organization but you can specialize in a tourism aspect whether it be to, marketing or finance or wherever that may be. But then, you think about all the different products we have, and they all require operational staff. And, so the, as, as diverse and broad as the tourism products are, that's the kind of roles you can have, you know?

I've had sales, marketing roles. Probably some of the most fun roles I've had have been in the product and procurement section of it, you know? Will you, on behalf of your company, go travel to a destination, sample all the products, come back and suggest, or select which ones you'll use, contract that product, create brochures and advertising campaigns off the back of it. Like I said,

depending on whatever your interest is or whatever your passion point, guaranteed almost would be something there for you.

You know, the beauty of this industry, it really, it really applauds and really encourages people to be proactive, and to be, show their own levels of innovation and productivity, you know? There's so many jobs out there, and if you can demonstrate that passion to an employer, then, you're a really great chance to getting the job. A lot of the opportunities are advertised. And look, you know, if you just start knocking on doors or start asking the question, a lot will present themselves. They really applaud that kind of, that get up and go in our industry 'cause that's what it's all about.

Liam (Host)

That's fantastic.

Michael (Guest)

And the other really key thing. This is a people industry.

Liam (Host)

Yes.

Michael (Guest)

If you can, if you can turn up with that great level of enthusiasm and a real love for it and a passion for working with people, you will go a long, long way in this industry. People are after authentic experiences. And they're after storytelling. So if you've got the ability to relate to somebody, you'll take their, whatever you're doing with them, from a, say a half-day experience to a really memorable experience. Something they'll, kind of, they'll stick with them for 10, 20, 50 years.

Liam (Host)

So thinking ahead, what's the forecast of tourism on the North Coast?

Michael (Guest)

I think that tourism on the North Coast, the future is very bright, you know? We've got an immensely popular destination. And then, we've just got such an abundance of amazing kind of assets. We've got the perfect climate. We've got tons of different destinations. We've got lots of great attractions. And as we move forward and people are seeking more and more natural and clean and great experiences, we've got that in absolute abundance.

And it presents so many opportunities in career paths for people to stay in region as well, you know? 'Cause so many of us come here, and often have to move away. Tourism provides a career path in regional Australia, where you can go from high school right to a Senior Executive job. And you may never have to leave your region.

You'll absolutely have a great career in tourism, high-paying, great traveling, lots of benefits like any other ones, but a lot of fun along the way, as well.

Liam (Host)

Well, that's ticking boxes for me (laughs).

Michael (Guest)

(laughs) It's ticked boxes for me for 25 years.

Liam (Host)

Thanks very much for joining us today.

Michael (Guest)

My absolute pleasure, thank you.

Liam (Host)

Thank you.

Liam (Host)

So there you go. That's a wrap of another great episode of EPPP TV. I hope you got out of it as much as I did. I learned about a heap of new careers I had no idea even existed.

Thanks for watching, and I'll see you in the next episode.