

Australia's refrigeration capital?

In what is now becoming a regular feature of ARBS, the WorldSkills National Refrigeration Competition was held during the exhibition last month. Continuing to enjoy strong support from industry partners, the competition again showcased the depth of young talent in the refrigeration industry and also threw up an interesting quirk, as Sean McGowan discovered.



A refrigeration competitor at ARBS.

There's something going on in South-East Queensland.

Australia's fastest growing metropolitan area, the region is now home to one in eight Australians, and has a population of more than 2.7 million. It is also home to some of the best young refrigeration mechanics in the country, after another of its progeny took out the 2010 WorldSkills National Refrigeration Competition.

Perhaps the area should be known as "Australia's Refrigeration Capital", but given the ARC abbreviation is already a well established part of the industry, perhaps the "Home of Young Refrigeration Gurus" or HOYRG is more appropriate?

Then again, maybe not.

But seriously, South-East Queensland has an uncanny knack of producing the goods when it comes to WorldSkills and the refrigeration category.

Having developed 2001's international gold medal winner, Stephanie Bugg, who stunned the refrigeration category of the international WorldSkills competition almost 10 years ago by becoming the first female winner in the category, the area is also home to 2003 refrigeration Skillaroo Matthew Kues-Sales and 2007's Lachlan Thomas.

Now another South-East Queensland has set a path to the international stage by winning gold at the national competition – Liam Janetzki – who did his training at SkillsTech Australia, Queensland's



Gold medallist Liam Janetzki in action at ARBS.

leading TAFE institute, while being employed with the Toowoomba depot of Qbuild, Queensland's Department of Public Works.

He took first prize ahead of 12 other competitors who over the first two days of ARBS had their skill and knowledge put to the test in a trying competition staged in front of Australia's HVAC&R industry.

It was a strong showing from SkillsTech Australia, which also trained Brisbane-based silver medallist Adam Inglis. Bronze was taken out by West Sydney's Matthew Duncan.

Having won gold at the national competition, Janetzki now joins the Skillaroos, who will take on the very best from around the world at the WorldSkills international competition, to be held in London in October next year.

"It was a challenging but also exciting experience competing at ARBS, and the competition really tested your knowledge and skill," says Janetzki, who was encouraged by his teacher Grant Mallet to compete in WorldSkills.

"I'll be doing some training at the WorldSkills national competition in Brisbane as well as some extra training at SkillsTech Australia's Acacia Ridge campus in the lead-up to London, and hopefully I can take home the gold."

Janetzki puts the incredible run of competitors from South-East Queensland down to the growth in

the area, and the wide range of equipment young refrigeration mechanics work with on a day-to-day basis.

"There are a lot of dairies here, as well as industrial plants. There's also commercial and domestic, so you get to work with a lot of different equipment, and that probably helps."

Showcasing Australian talent

Through a program of competitions aligned to national training packages, WorldSkills Australia has been providing young Australians aged 23 years and under with the opportunity to gain new skills, compete against peers in their chosen trade and fast track their skills and career development for almost 30 years.

WorldSkills Australia is a member of WorldSkills International – a global network of nearly 50 countries that participate in trade and skills competitions. Australian competitions operate on a two-year cycle, with national competitions fed by regional events, with the winners joining the national team, nicknamed the Skillaroos, and advancing to the international competition.

This year, the national competition was held in Brisbane in early May, and attracted over 500 competitors across 50 different trade and skill categories, ranging from metals and engineering, to bricklaying, nursing and web design.

According to Mark Callaghan, CEO of WorldSkills Australia; in over 20 years of international competition, WorldSkills Australia has consistently ranked in the top 10 performing countries in the world. At the most recent international competition held in Calgary, Canada last year, the Australian team shared in 12 medals, including two gold and five silver.

It's this performance, Callaghan says, that reflects on the importance Australia places on training and education.

"This [was] a fantastic result for Australia. It shows the increase in value that we place on our skills and trades. All of these young people need to be held up as role models for Australia," he says.

Despite failing to land a podium finish last year, one of Australia's most successful categories continues to be refrigeration, which boasts four international gold medallists including Bugg.

Again it's further proof that the training and on-the-job experience received in Australia's HVAC&R industry is second to none.



The refrigeration medallists, Matthew Duncan, Liam Janetzki and Adam Inglis.

Uniquely, refrigeration is also one of just a few categories to hold its national competition away from the WorldSkills National Competition, with the bi-annual ARBS exhibition an ideal venue to showcase the young talent being produced by the industry. This is made possible by the generous support of industry organisations and corporate sponsors, which help fund the space provided at ARBS. ■

Refrigeration medallists

■ Gold medal: **Liam Janetzki**

Region: **Toowoomba**

Training provider:

SkillsTech Australia – Acacia Ridge

Employer: **Qbuild Toowoomba**

■ Silver medal: **Adam Inglis**

Region: **Brisbane**

Training provider:

SkillsTech Australia – Acacia Ridge

Employer: **Network Refrigeration**

■ Bronze medal: **Matthew Duncan**

Region: **Sydney West**

Training provider:

TAFE NSW Western Sydney Institute

Employer: **Tritech Refrigeration**

More information: www.worldskills.org.au



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