

## Case Study 2 - Structured Workplace Learning

### Background

Antony, a year 11 VCE Vocational Major student, embarked on a significant vocational journey by pursuing a Cert II in Engineering. As part of his educational experience, Antony engaged in a Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) placement at Costa Exchange Mushroom Farm in Mernda. The farm, known for its commitment to providing practical experiences for vocational students, operates multiple farms and horticultural properties across Australia, delivering fresh, quality produce nationally and internationally.



### Duration and Scope of SWL Placement

Antony's SWL placement spanned 20 weeks, with a commitment of one day per week at Costa Exchange Mushroom Farm. This placement allowed him to immerse himself in various engineering-related tasks, including fitting and oiling parts to heavy machinery and installing, maintaining, and repairing industrial machinery.

### Career Development opportunities

Beyond the technical skills gained, Antony's SWL placement at Costa Exchange Mushroom Farm offered a broader educational perspective. He had the chance to understand the workplace dynamics, clarify his career aspirations, develop good work habits, and gain insights into potential job roles and career progression. Collaborating with experienced staff members became integral to Antony's learning journey.

Antony's communication, problem-solving abilities, and confidence saw noticeable improvement during his placement. Working alongside senior staff members at Costa Exchange Mushroom Farm contributed significantly to Antony's personal and professional growth. He expressed gratitude for the guidance received, emphasising the positive impact on

his development.

### Supervisor's perspective

*Antony encountered challenges typical of a work environment, such as the early morning schedule and difficulty maintaining cleanliness due to machinery oil. Heavy lifting presented another hurdle. Despite these challenges, Antony's determination and focus on his future career as a fabricator or fitter motivated him to overcome these obstacles, highlighting his commitment to personal and professional growth.*

### Future goals and aspirations

Antony's enthusiasm for his SWL placement led him to approach his supervisor, expressing a desire to continue the placement in 2024. Not only did the supervisor agree to extend the placement, but he also proposed the possibility of an apprenticeship with Costa Exchange upon Antony's completion of year 12. Antony is now contemplating the prospect of a School-Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT) in 2024, showcasing his dedication to continuous learning and skill development. Antony envisions securing an apprenticeship, ideally as a Turner, with his long-term goal of working on an oil rig at sea overseas. His aspirations align with the diverse opportunities available in the engineering field, and Costa Exchange Mushroom Farm has become an essential stepping stone in Antony's journey toward a fulfilling and successful career.

### Conclusion

Antony's SWL placement at Costa Exchange Mushroom Farm is a compelling example of the positive impact that practical experiences can have on a student's education and career development. Collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners creates invaluable opportunities for students like Antony to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application, setting the stage for a promising future in engineering.

### A teacher at his school shared the following:

*I just wanted to share this story with you because the result has come from your hard work. One of our students has been working at the mushroom farm ..... This student is a quiet and reserved fellow who lacks confidence. The employers have been great with him, and he has developed a great deal of confidence. Earlier this week he approached me and said that he has been offered an apprenticeship at the farm doing fitting and turning. He was over the moon. The hard work and diligence that you put into locating employment for the young people has resulted in Antony getting a full-time job. I am not sure whether other teachers share these stories with you, but I hope they do. You have created a wonderful opportunity for a young person who had little belief in himself.*