

Local off to State Awards

Local first-year mechanical apprentice Evan Dunne has been awarded School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year for the Western Sydney Region.

Evan, who is employed by Production Automotive, was awarded the honour on Friday night at the NSW Training Awards. Among the trades and professionals recognised in the finalist category were electricians, carpenters, hospitality workers and machinists.

"I was both shocked and privileged to be recognised for the award", Evan said. "At Production I'm able to learn different things and get exposed to a wide variety of tasks that not everyone has the opportunity to experience".

Chairperson Jason Sultana spoke of how that the judging panel had noted that Evan's commitment and love of what he does came through very strongly in the interview.

"I really enjoy being able to work with a very helpful team and being included in all aspects of the business. Production Automotive is a great all-round learning environment".

"I have another panel interview for the State awards in July, and I hope to represent the region and my colleagues well".

Evan will be representing Western Sydney at the State Awards on 15 September in Darling Harbour.

Production Automotive are located in Batt Street, Penrith, and can be contacted on 4731 6660 or via www.productionautomotive.com.au.







STRAIGHT TORQUE

With Melinda Leyshon of Production Automotive

A few weeks ago I was privileged to have been asked to speak at the Sydney Women's Leadership Symposium in Sydney. The topic? The challenges of working in an environment with low-gender diversity.

As a female business owner in a male-dominated industry, it was interesting to be part of a discussion that centred around concepts such as 'the glass ceiling' and the 'male corporate identity'. What it confirmed for me was that, whether we work in small business or corporate, over 95% of working women face the same battles as me every day as both employees and consumers.

From a business perspective, it has taken me years to find my feet in this industry. From the beginning I was met with resistance – being a female in the automotive industry can be tough! There

are assumptions that you have no idea about what you are doing and that you need to emulate men in order to succeed. I have a

female mechanic at my workshop, and the first thing people ask is "Is she gay? Is she butch?" There are assumptions that she has to "be like a man" and has given up her femininity in order to do the job.

Chantel is, in fact, a gorgeous, feminine young mum who is incredibly good at what she does. She wears false nails and a different coloured flower in her hair every day. She can also talk your socks off when it comes to cars! She is a woman making a mark in a man's world, proving that you don't have to act like a man in order to deliver quality results.

We all know that the automotive industry is not known for its respectable treatment of females - I've experienced it myself. I've always had an interest in vintage cars – specifically VWs – and I drove a 1974 VW Superbug for a few years before I could save up for an earlier-model beetle. I distinctly remember walking into the mechanic's workshop (doing my best to ignore the half-naked women on calendars all over the walls) and telling him I had just over \$10,000 to spend on an Oval-window Beetle (one of the early ones). He said to me "Love, you're a girl

– you're too short to see out of the back window. I'll build you a later-model beetle and you'll never know the difference".

Needless to say, he didn't get the job. An immediate assumption was made that because I was a female, I didn't have a clue about what I wanted.

As a consumer, this happens to women a lot. I see women come in here with quotes after being told that their car needs hundreds or thousands of dollars worth of work. We refuse to do comparative quotes off a competitor's quote – in so many cases, when we put the vehicle on the hoist we find that so many of the items that have been quoted are just not required.

Don't get me wrong – there are plenty of workshops in Penrith doing the right thing. But there are plenty who make the assumption that women are easy targets. This has been a male-dominated industry for so long that some men have almost created their own rules when it comes to the treatment of women. If this wasn't the case, the Female Friendly Accreditation (a national accreditation for businesses) would not be as successful as it is.



As I said earlier, over 95% of women have been challenged at work or as a consumer because of their sex. Whether you are male or female, integrity, service and responsibility are key to any business. At first I thought that being a woman in a man's world was a hard ask, but now I see it as the opposite. It gives me a distinct corporate advantage – there is a direct relationship between having a brilliantly performing team and having a diverse team with the best talents. I'm lucky to have both - a team which treats everyone with respect, delivering both males and females the same standards in service.

Unit 9, 61 - 63 Batt St, Penrith NSW 2750 • Tel : 4731 6660 • Fax : 4731 6499
www.productionautomotive.com.au • info@productionautomotive.com.au