

CHOOSE STEEL AS A CAREER PANEL

Latest Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) figures reveal continued jobs shortages in the steel industry, with fitter and metal fabricator jobs particularly affected. JSA's 2023 Skills Priority List shows that 36% of occupations are in national shortage (332 out of 916)—5% higher than in 2022.

Among these, 47% were professionals, mostly related to health, engineering, information communication technology (ICT) and science roles. Another 33% were technician and trades workers occupations. All five of the largest employing non-construction trades occupations were also in shortage, including fitter and metal fabricator.

Young achievers panel

This skills shortage isn't just a number—it represents projects delayed, potential innovations stalled, and industry growth curtailed. As such, the Australian Steel Convention dedicated a session to *Choose Steel as a Career*. This session featured a young achievers panel of: Shannon Kieran, structural engineer at Aurecon; Olivia Fanke, environment advisor at BlueScope; Atilla Mustafa, apprentice boilermaker at Structural Challenge; and Jonathan Rogers, sales representative at Vulcan.

As a structural engineer in Aurecon's Darwin office, Shannon Kieran has provided structural design and construction site support services for projects in sectors as diverse as civil, energy, maritime, telecommunications, resources, infrastructure and defence. She has worked on steel, timber and engineered wood products, as well as reinforced and post-tensioned concrete structures in cyclonic and high wind environments. Shannon is also a lecturer at her local university, teaching civil and structural engineering as well as geotechnical engineering. Shannon was the winner of the ASI's 2022 National Young Designer, Detailer or Tradesperson Award.

Olivia Fanke is an environmental advisor at BlueScope's Western Port site. She has been with BlueScope for five years, starting in a position in their chemistry lab, before moving into an environment manager role at the Port Kembla site.

"I did work experience at BlueScope's chemistry lab in year 10, which led me to study chemistry at school. I loved science and wanted to get into something science-based, but

it wasn't until I got to do hands-on things in the lab that I decided to study environmental science. Halfway through my career, a job at the chem lab popped up and I applied."

Jonathan Rogers is an internal sales representative at Vulcan, who works predominantly in stainless steel. He had no particular background in steel when he first started at Vulcan, having worked in climbing gyms and as a baker.

"I heard about the vacancy at Vulcan and applied not knowing what the steel industry was all about. The visibility of the industry and the businesses related to steel is very low outside the industry itself. It has been fantastic working in steel—I have lots of opportunities, and work with a great team, and on a range of great projects and challenges," Jonathan said.

Atilla Mustafa is a third year boilermaker apprentice at Structural Challenge. At 22 years of age, Mustafa commenced his apprenticeship later than most. However, he's wasted no time in proving his commendable work ethic and dedication. From his first day, Atilla has displayed a passion and willingness to learn as much as he can about steel.

Initially, Atilla commenced his career with a plumbing apprenticeship. He soon realised that working with metal was where his passion lay, and sought out a boilermaking apprenticeship, securing a position with Structural Challenge soon after.

As Shannon commented, "We've all ended up in the steel industry almost by accident. I see this a lot of time with students coming through university. The problem is, students then struggle to understand what their day-to-day jobs will look like. University studies don't prepare students well for what to expect when they get out into the workplace. Students get lost in their studies because they don't see how what they're learning is applicable to their career."

Jonathan: "People who are my age tend to be looking at going to university, or they're doing PhDs at the moment. For them, the idea of the steel industry is vague—they have no idea how broad the industry is, or that it even exists. Promoting the steel industry at schools and universities is essential. And promoting the fact there is a range of jobs is essential—the steel industry needs sales people, accountants,





L to R: Jonathan Rogers (Vulcan), Mark Cain (ASI), Atilla Mustafa (Structural Challenge), Olivia Fanke (BlueScope), and Shannon Kieran (Aurecon).

purchasing managers, boilermakers. There are so many jobs available."

Atilla commented, "For our generation, everyone needs to feel that they are part of something—connected to something at a wider level, be it social or professional."

When asked about the importance of longevity and stability in their careers, Jonathan said: "Vulcan provides a lot of opportunities to move forward, change roles, or move to a different site. Any company that can provide opportunities will be more likely to keep employees on-board, and keep them engaged."

Olivia agreed: "Having flexibility of movement between roles, but within the same company is essential."

Shannon: "It's not necessarily about providing graduates with structured career progression. It can be as simple as making sure your employees have the opportunity to expand their skills and get as broad a range of experience as possible. In this way, you feel as though you're growing and accomplishing something in your everyday role—you're feeling engaged and challenged every day."

When asked about the importance of, and preferred management style,

Shannon said, "If your people are happy and want to be here, they will give their best. If they feel like they belong and are part of the team, and you have a culture where it is encouraged to speak up, share your opinions and ask questions, then younger staff will have that engagement and buy-in."

Olivia: "I don't think you need to be coddled and praised by your boss, but you need a supportive network in your day-to-day role."

When asked about gender diversity within the industry, Olivia said, "I haven't felt like I've been denied any opportunities being a woman. But there is a divide. BlueScope is working to bring more women into the industry."

Shannon agreed: "I've never felt anything particularly special about being a woman. You never feel out of place in the offices, but it can sometimes happen out on-site. Usually, the barrier is that I'm young, rather than a woman."

The younger generation is seeking meaningful and fulfilling work that aligns with their values and allows for a healthy work-life balance, while also valuing opportunities for career advancement and skill development in a dynamic and inclusive workplace. They want flexibility and the chance to make a positive impact on society.

L to R: Shannon Kieran (Aurecon), Jonathan Rogers (Vulcan), Olivia Fanke (BlueScope), Atilla Mustafa (Structural Challenge), and Convention MC Adam Spencer.



THE ASI CAREER CENTRE

The Australian Steel Institute (ASI) understands how important it is to attract and retain good people, particularly in a labour market that is the tightest that many of us can recall. The number of occupations suffering from the skills shortage has almost doubled since 2021, with some roles having thousands of unfilled vacancies.

To help combat this skills shortage, ASI recently launched the ASI Career Centre—a one-stop shop for advertising, finding and preparing candidates for a position in the steel supply chain.

ASI has also created a range of resources designed to help businesses and individuals match the right people to the right job in the steel industry. ASI resources can help individuals make informed career decisions and increase their marketability, while enabling companies to develop their workforce, optimise recruitment strategies, and boost productivity.

ASI resources include a steel industry induction course, information on topics like business visas and careers in fabrication, and a university support pack. All these resources were on-hand at the Convention, via the ASI Careers Hub exhibitor booth.

SCAN THE QR CODE OPPOSITE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ASI CAREER CENTRE >>>

