

NEWS RELEASE

Apprentice intake boosts youth employment

Wilmar Sugar has reaffirmed its commitment to youth employment, with 28 new apprentices starting work this month.

The new recruits join about 120 apprentices already undertaking trade training at Wilmar Sugar's eight sugar mills.

Wilmar Sugar Learning and Development Manager Tina Klekar said the new starters included budding electricians, fitters, boilermakers and diesel fitters.

With high youth unemployment across North and Central Queensland, this year's apprenticeships were hotly contested.

"We received more than 660 applications for the positions," Ms Klekar said.

"We were very impressed with the standard of applicants.

"The 28 successful candidates represent the best talent from across all regions."

Of the group, 13 will be based at Burdekin mills, seven in the Herbert, four at Proserpine Mill, two at Plane Creek Mill and two at the Sarina Distillery.

Wilmar Sugar is also offering two boiler operator traineeships for the first time this year, one based at the Herbert mills and the other in the Burdekin.

Ms Klekar said Wilmar Sugar placed high value on its apprenticeship program.

“It’s important for us to continually renew our skills base,” she said.

“We’re proud to be able to offer young people in regional areas the opportunity to learn a trade and get a great start to their careers.”

The new apprentices commenced employment on 1 February and will, this week, undertake the third and final week of a Safe Start Program to introduce them to safe workplace behaviours.

Safety Manager Dave Zeller said former Australian Test and Queensland Origin representative player Brent Tate was invited to talk to the group to reinforce the importance of making good decisions and always putting safety first, whether at work or at home.

“A football field may seem like a very different workplace to a sugar mill but there are actually a lot of similarities,” Mr Zeller said.

“Brent has some really great personal experiences to share about making positive decisions around safety, teamwork and listening to advice from mentors.

“We hope his story gives the apprentices a different perspective on safety and helps to reinforce some key messages.”

The apprentices will have their first chance to put their safety training into practice when they commence work on the job at their respective mills next Monday.

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