

So you are thinking of a career change? Conversations on making the decision to change careers later in life.

Senator Michaelia Cash:

Hi, I'm Senator Michaelia Cash, Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business. Welcome to National Skills Week 2020, and to this year's podcast series, Journeys To Success brought to you by SkillsOne. In this podcast series, you'll hear from a number of VET alumni and Australian training award winners. They will share with you interesting and varied journeys they have taken, due to their vocational education and training.

Senator Michaelia Cash:

Our VET Alumni and Australian training award winners come from all walks of life. They have inspirational stories to share about what prompted their learning decisions, their influences, their training and work journey, and why vocational education and training was the right choice for them.

Senator Michaelia Cash:

This podcast is a great way to learn about the success people have had in their careers and life. There is so much diversity and opportunity that a VET pathway can offer, so enjoy the podcast, be inspired and the best of luck to those who are starting on their VET journey.

Senator Michaelia Cash:

And if you want more information on where a vocational education and training pathway can take you, visit The National Careers Institute website at nci.dese.gov.au.

Anne- Host:

This episode explores the experience of two mature-aged apprentices, Anthony Di Cristofaro and Rekeisha Voss. Anthony is the Western Australian Apprentice of the Year for 2019, and went on to be a finalist at the Australian Training Awards. Rekeisha is the 2019 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Student of the Year at the Australian Training Awards and at the Western Australia Training Awards.

Anne- Host:

They both are sharing with us, their experience and their journey, and the decisions they made to become a mature-age apprentice or a trainee. Anthony and Rekeisha share with us how they made that decision, the issues that they had to confront in changing their jobs as a mature-age apprentice. And then talk about insights and the success that they had in making that decision.

Anne- Host:

We finish up with some insights and advice from both Anthony and Rekeisha to parents, to people considering changing their jobs, and to career advisors. So join with me in welcoming Rekeisha and Anthony to the podcast.

Anne- Host:

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So hi, hi Rekeisha, hi Anthony, how are you?

Anthony:

Good, thank you.

Rekeisha:

Good, thank you.

Anne- Host:

Fantastic.

Anthony:

How are you?

Anne- Host:

Oh I'm great, I'm fantastic. Absolutely great. So I thought what we'd be doing, if I could just set the stage on talking a little bit about yourself to get started is, Rekeisha I wanted to speak to you, what actually is a mature-age apprentice? Before we go any further, is it a general age group, or would you like to explain that?

Rekeisha:

So in, what I believe a mature age for an apprentice is, is from the age of 21, which it may not seem like a mature age, 21 is still really, really young but that is what is considered a mature age to do an apprenticeship or a traineeship.

Anne- Host:

Right, and that's because I know the 21-year-old accesses an adult age and they then get different subsidies, versus someone who's under 21, yeah. I know people get confused thinking a mature age could be something like about 30, 40, 50, okay great.

Anne- Host:

So we're going to talk about you Rekeisha, because you've got a great journey that you're going on and you made career changes in your life. So I was wondering if you want to give us some information about yourself first.

Rekeisha:

Yeah, so I started off as a young mum, I started off as a really young mum. I was 17 when I had my child, and at that time I devoted my life to just being a mum. I always knew that I didn't want to just be a mum though, I wanted to do a lot more, I just didn't really know what direction to go in. So I eventually as my daughter got a bit older decided to get into beauty therapy, enroll at TAFE and do a diploma at TAFE, and I did that for a year. I really, really enjoyed it and at the time it was my passion and it still has a place in my

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heart. I still really enjoy doing beauty therapy from home, and I enjoy making people feel good about themselves.

Rekeisha:

So I definitely still like to do that but as time went on I realized as I got into different... I was in and out of homelessness, I was going through some of my own personal issues and I really wanted to sow my roots a little bit more and I just didn't know where to begin or what to do. So I did a bit of a Google search, when we don't know some things we usually go on Google and just have a random Google search and find all different random answers, but I got lucky and I came across the job WA board and there used to be aboriginal section on there for indigenous people basically.

Rekeisha:

So there was lots of different jobs and traineeship opportunities and I just went, pick one Rekeisha and just put yourself out there and see what will happen. So at that time I just thought, I've got nothing to lose I'm just going to do it. And I actually applied for the indigenous Cert 3 in government.

Rekeisha:

I didn't really know what that meant, I was terrified, didn't know what I was getting myself into and didn't know where I would be placed. I didn't honestly think because I wasn't very good at reading and writing and the basic type of skills that you need to have a job, or what I thought you needed to have a job. I just thought I'm not going to get it.

Rekeisha:

But yeah, I got a call back and it really changed my life because over time it wasn't just a traineeship where I was going to building up my skills to get the certificate and hopefully get a job out of it. In my personal life I became more confident and I felt like I had purpose, so completing the certificate wasn't just completing a certificate in a way of getting a job, it was so much more to me.

Rekeisha:

And I eventually completed that in 12 months and then was offered something in full-time employment, and I'm still employed with the Department of Training and Workforce Development.

Anne- Host:

So just some questions that come out of that Rekeisha, because they're sounds huge, I'm so wow and all those things. So first of all, you were 17 when you became a mum, and how long before you learned your beauty, you were looking at an apprenticeship or you just did a course?

Rekeisha:

It was a diploma in beauty therapy at TAFE, and I didn't really know, yeah where that would lead me, yeah. My daughter was one and half when I did that. Yeah.

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Anne- Host:

So you did the diploma, where did you start? Do you mind me asking, where did you start with training for your second traineeship? How old were you? Do you mind me asking?

Rekeisha:

So I started the second traineeship in April of 2018. So between, I guess 2013 to 2016, I was in and out of jobs and I was still doing work from home, with beauty therapy that was my main source of income at the time, but I just felt like I really wanted more. I wanted a change, I wanted something a little bit more deeper and then that's when I went on the hunt and continued on to find different, little courses here and there but nothing that really piqued my interest and then that's when I eventually stumbled across the traineeship.

Anne- Host:

Great, okay. So you were probably round about the 26, 27 age group, would you say?

Rekeisha:

Yeah, so the cut off for the traineeship was 24, the Certificate 3 in government, and yeah so I almost missed out on that, so I was very, very lucky that I was able to get into that traineeship.

Anne- Host:

Right. Okay and can I ask a really dumb question? What does a Certificate 3 in government do? What does that involve doing?

Rekeisha:

Yeah, well I was a little bit like that, to be honest I had no idea what this entails.

Rekeisha:

Yeah, what is a Certificate 3 Government? So basically it covers a little bit of legislation stuff, it's like a broad overview of a little bit of what it's like to work as a public servant, basic stuff. And then because where I was hosted at the time which is the department of training, looks a little bit deeper into some of their policies and their procedures, and what's it like to work with their department, because they're a government department as well.

Rekeisha:

So sort of a broad view of stuff But where I was placed was in the IT area, which I didn't know and it didn't say that, that's where I would be going. So that made me even more terrified. But I was excited. So, yeah. It was good because it's on the job. I was able to get my certificate, learn all this other stuff about government and also learn stuff in the IT field which I thought I would never have an opportunity to do.

Anne- Host:

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So how did you go about getting through the traineeship, because I'm assuming that there would have been those requirements in there was that supported or how did you get through that?

Rekeisha:

Yeah, I just was very honest, or I tried to be as honest. I was very, I guess, embarrassed. And I know personally that a lot of indigenous people like myself, they will avoid raising their hand in a classroom to answer a question because they don't want to sound stupid or shamed. It's that shame factor and I was covered in it, shame. It's shame to say that you can't read. It's shame to say that you can't write.

Rekeisha:

But, I thought I'd gotten here so far and I wanted to break that stigma and rip off that layer of shame that I had, and I just was honest with my mentor at time. I said, "Look I can't spell properly. I can't write properly. I can't read properly." I just was very honest. I said, "You may ask me a question and I may need 10, 15 minutes to answer it. It may be something really, really basic."

Rekeisha:

So, it was all about just being open and honest and they really worked with me on that, so failure wasn't an option. I was very, very grateful to be placed with my department because failure's not an option. They weren't going to let me go, they weren't going to let me give up. They literally pushed me all the way through. So I was very, very grateful and very lucky.

Anne- Host:

That is just such a beautiful story. I have to say, and well done and congratulations for that because the resolve and the strength that you had to show there is just phenomenal. Most people as you said, would just sit at the back and just pretend. So, that strength is just unbelievable. And thank you for sharing that story.

Anne- Host:

I wanted to go on to you Anthony, if that's okay? Your journey was pretty different, in regards to your moving to your career change and your change. But it's still got a few similarities in regards to it, in regards to some of the struggles and everything.

Anne- Host:

Could you just let us know a little bit about your background and how you changed jobs in your current location or your current career at the moment because it's not where you started, is it?

Anthony:

No, not at all. So, yeah no worries. I'll take you back to school. When I was in high school I was put on a path where university was the only way to go. There were no other

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options put in front of me. TAFE was not even considered as a... It was not something you would do as a first, second or even third choice, it was a last resort.

Anthony:

But university was the go. You need a university degree to become anything, and that was pushed onto me by teachers and career advisors and even my parents. My dad's an engineer, so he was like, "You must go to uni." So that's what I did. It's going to make me feel really old but at the time it was TE it's now ATA. All right.

Anthony:

So I did my TE and I did quite well, got a tertiary entrance rank of 90. Funnily enough, applied for law at UWA. Didn't quite get high enough so I went and did a Bachelor of Arts with the idea of trying to transfer into law later. And I started that but then ended up going into a psychology direction. Picked up psychology units and majored in that.

Anthony:

What happened was, I realized along the way I was not going to be a psychologist without doing one or two more degrees, several more years study. So at the end of my degree when I was getting close to it, I didn't have a job and I didn't want to accumulate anymore debt. It wasn't for me. So I dropped out, I didn't finish.

Anthony:

From there I went to work in the mining and oil and gas industries. There was a major boom going on in Western Australia at the time and the jobs were everywhere. So you could just go to the mines and make good money. There's plenty of work going around, so I did that.

Anthony:

Yeah, so after the 10 years in the mining industry and all the jobs started to dry up, and I knew at the end of the day I was an unskilled worker. I didn't have any qualification behind me, and as jobs started drying up and managers were going in for normal positions. I knew I had to do something, or I was going to have to be forced to do something I didn't want to do to support my family. Dig holes or stack shelves, or whatever. And there's nothing wrong with doing that to support your family but it's not what I wanted to do. So I looked at the apprenticeship system as a way of reentering, re-skilling and that's what why I chose mature-age apprenticeship. I was 31 at the time. I had a wife and two kids, and yeah, went and started an apprenticeship in carpentry.

Anne- Host:

Right, fantastic. So, another thing I want to pick up is that you were saying that you were at uni, you almost finished it, but then you started working. But you didn't work in anything related to the study that you did at university?

Anthony:

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No, nothing. It was completely unrelated. It was just general work on the mines. There's a million positions you can do. I worked in an office, I worked as a TA, I worked in whatever was going on in the mines at the time. There were lots of jobs, because of the boom.

Anne- Host:

Right, okay.

Anthony:

Yeah.

Anne- Host:

Okay. So, tell me about your apprenticeship. You started at 31 years of age, and what was your apprenticeship in?

Anthony:

So my apprenticeship was in carpentry and joinery. And I did most of it in the construction industry. So, building commercial, apartments, high-rise, I did a lot of that, hotels and yeah, just big commercial buildings generally.

Anthony:

Yeah, for builders.

Anne- Host:

And so I wanted to talk a little bit about that, so for both of you, Rekeisha and Anthony, you both went back into another career, or started another career later. I should say later in life, but really 24, 30 that's still not really very old. But you would have been... That's not what would be considered to be a typical apprentice. The stereotypical apprentice is 15 to 19 years olds, eager, just coming out of school.

Anne- Host:

So I just wanted to go to either one of you, I might go to you first Rekeisha, just ask you, what was it like being a mature age or an older trainee? Did you notice any difference or did you feel the expectations were different for you? What was it like for you?

Rekeisha:

Yeah. I mean from the get-go, we did a group interview. So it was really, really strange. So once we'd gotten the call back to say, "You've made it to the interview round." I thought it was just a one-on-one interview. When I walked in it was myself and several other young indigenous women and you could tell they were all really, really young. Fresh out of high school young.

Rekeisha:

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So I immediately felt like, Am I in the wrong room? I felt really, really old because I just didn't think that I was a mature-aged trainee. I thought, I'm still youngish. So, I didn't think of it like that. And then once I'd gotten settled in my role, a lot of my colleagues thought that I was a uni student coming in, doing some sort of uni prac, or something like that.

Rekeisha:

So, just from the opinion from others as well, a lot of other people thought that I wasn't a trainee. They knew that there was a new indigenous trainee in the area, but they didn't know who it was. And then when I say, "It's me." They're like, "Oh. Oh, I didn't realize." Or even me saying I had children, they'd be like, "Oh, oh really?"

Rekeisha:

So I found it an unusual experience but I'm grateful because I feel like if I'd gone in when I was a little bit younger, for me personally, I don't think I would have been quite ready at that time. I was more ready now. I felt like with my own personal issues and things like that, I was ready to go in as a mature-aged trainee.

Rekeisha:

I felt like I got a lot more out of it myself, that's me personally. But, yeah I really enjoyed it, I loved it. Just winning in my category, my mum, who is 47 years old, didn't realize what a mature-aged trainee or an apprentice was. Didn't even know that, that was a thing or you could do that.

Rekeisha:

My mum had not worked in 10 years, and is now doing a traineeship with BHP. So she didn't know that, that was a thing, that she would be capable or be able to even do that. So, this didn't just open up things for myself, it opened things up for family members and my mum now is considered as a mature-aged trainee. So, it's great.

Anne- Host:

So, in fact this is almost like a reversal of the roles, isn't it? That you are actually giving advice to your parents on where they can go to study next, as opposed to the other way around. I think that's perfect, excellent.

Rekeisha:

Yeah, me too.

Anne- Host:

I think it really enforces that lifelong learning, that you're never too old to learn. You're never too old to go and do qualifications, are you?

Rekeisha:

So you are thinking of a career change? Conversations on making the decision to change careers later in life.

Yeah, definitely not. And that's what she said, "Aren't I too old? Are you sure I can. I thought I'd be too old. It's for young people." I said, "No, it's not." I was able to then, it opened up a realm for me to go in there and be like, "Well..." and tell her everything that I know now and then she can go on and tell her friends and so forth. So it's been great.

Anne- Host:

That's beautiful. That is really lovely. So, Anthony over to you. How was it with you being on the tools? Because you're in a really traditional construction, I'm assuming it's outdoors, it's on the tools. And then you walk in, 31 years of age, I mean how... But you're a first year apprentice.

Anthony:

Yeah.

Anne- Host:

How did that go? How was that experience for you? Tell me about it?

Anthony:

I tell you a funny story. At the start, as a first-year and my first day on site and my first... I worked in a few locations, but my first job and my first builder, I reported directly to the site manager. So the head honcho is my direct boss. So I'm tailing him, non-stop.

Anthony:

So everyone thought I was someone really important, right? A supervisor. So everyone... No, everyone did. Everyone's like, "Wow, that guy is someone important." So I rolled with that for as long as I could. True story. But eventually people will find out, and yeah, it's just people are... They don't get it at the start, especially in traditional trades where you do that when you're a kid. Most of them were doing it way back when they were out of school or they had parents who were in the trade, and that's what they followed them into. So, to have someone come in and do it at 31, and being an apprentice. A lot of them don't really connect to it.

Anthony:

But at the same time I found quite quickly to turn around and show support, once they understood. You explain, "Well, I'm 31 but I wanted to get a trade and these are my reasons." And they go, "Well good on you for having the guts to come in and do it for the right reasons. For wanting to be able to support your family and be financially secure and that kind of thing."

Anthony:

So, yeah. There was a lot of shocked tradies and people on site initially, but also very supportive in the end and a lot of lifelong friends made from people I met in the game.

Anne- Host:

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I mean they're beautiful stories. I mean, when you talk about starting these trades, starting these apprenticeships, traineeship, and even if it's not an apprenticeship, or even if it's not you're undergoing some sort of indentured experience, just changing careers can be quite confronting.

Anne- Host:

I mean having to go through that. In earlier times, that's how I'll say, I'm not going to say in my time. The idea was that you just did a bit of study and then for the next 20 or 40 years you just do the same job the whole time. Some of the latest reports out now are talking about, so you'll have about 17 different jobs, and they'll span over between five and six different career areas.

Anne- Host:

So the idea is that it sounds like, this is actually a more common experience that people learning and enrolling in vocation education, at the age of 25, 30, 40, 50 and 60. So, is that what you experienced? Did you see more mature age people during your journey? Are they going learning? Did you see that?

Anthony:

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. I did see it. Once I got there they started popping out in front of me, it was more common, I did think I'm going to be the only mature-age apprentice on site. Not the case. In my first role, yes but then later on met many along the way who were doing the same kind of thing in all different trades.

Anthony:

And met them at TAFE as well, the mature guys always turned out at TAFE, I can tell you that so you know who they are. But I think the idea of one career for life is really outdated as well and not practical at all. And I think that people have this accessibility now through that to be... It's flexible and it's reactive so you can go in there and adapt to how everything changes and change your career quite easily.

Anne- Host:

Yeah. And Rekeisha I wanted to draw up on something that you were also saying, you were talking about when you were 17 and you took up uni, that's because you thought well that's what you wanted to do and that was your passion. I don't know if they were your words that you spoke about.

Anne- Host:

But then you found out that just due to your life's circumstances and other things happening that whilst you still love it you realized that you could have more, that it doesn't stop you from just still doing it. You felt that you can change jobs and that still can grow and you can still enjoy yourself. Would that be right in how I summarized that?

Rekeisha:

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Yeah, 100%. I used to think when I was in high school, you had to go to uni to be something, if you went to TAFE that was the easy way out. You know what I mean? And then obviously family members and things like that, old school ways think, Well you've got to go to uni and you've got to be this and that's what you'll be for the rest of your life. Otherwise, you'll never get anywhere in life, and you won't have a good life.

Rekeisha:

And it's just those kind of statements and comments and things like that is what deters people from wanting to try something different and have change and stuff like that. So, we're in 2020 now and I think that you could be whatever you want one day and then be something completely different another day.

Rekeisha:

And I was-

Anne- Host:

That's fabulous.

Rekeisha:

Yeah. So I was very, very grateful that I had that little light bulb moment for myself it was like, I want to do beauty, but actually I want to do something different now. And it was completely different. And even now when I tell some of my older colleagues when they asked me, "What did you do before you came here?"

Rekeisha:

And I said, "Oh, I'm a beauty therapist by trade." They sort of went, "Huh? How did you end up here then?" It's nice to have that chat with them about... You know what I mean? And then they've got kids and they can chat to their kids about it, and it opens up their mind as well.

Anne- Host:

I can see as I'm talking to you guys that one of the things that would be incredibly similar about it as that your life skills and the soft skills that you learnt from one of your career areas and one of your jobs, and maybe some training that you had in the past, you were able to then apply.

Anne- Host:

So that was really a consistent similarity that even though you might be learning new technical things that it sounds to me that a lot of the soft skills that you needed to have, the problem-solving, the teamwork, the communication were something that even in your career change, it must have made that journey much easier for you.

Anne- Host:

Did you want to make a comment on that, Anthony, first?

So you are thinking of a career change? Conversations on making the decision to change careers later in life.

Rekeisha:

Yeah, absolutely. So, I held a successful career in mining and oil and gas for 10 years and like you say soft skills and just knowing how to work and having a good work ethic and you already know the do's and do nots, if you're a mature-age apprentice. You should do. So that when transferring over to your apprenticeship, young guys and girls that do an apprenticeship, need that.

Rekeisha:

And that's pretty much their entire first year, is learning how to work, learning how to move, learning the soft skills as well. We didn't have to do that. It actually works in our benefit. We get more responsibility, we get to them hone the proper skills quicker. We get more I believe, in that regards. So, it's definitely beneficial having that going into an apprenticeship.

Anne- Host:

Rekeisha, how did you find that? I can imagine your beauty therapy, your personal skills, the communication skills were incredibly high anyway. So, did you find that made it easier when you moved into your second traineeship?

Rekeisha:

Definitely. And even now, my director says that, we want to hire someone with soft skills. We want someone with soft skills because you can teach all of the technical stuff. You can sit down and teach people the stuff that you're learning at work when you're in a traineeship or apprenticeship or whatever it is. But it's the soft skills that can be a little bit harder to teach. So when someone comes along and they already have those soft skills it's fantastic. But yeah, I totally agree with Anthony. It's like you have a little bit more responsibility when you go in as a mature age because you have that soft skills already.

Anne- Host:

Yeah. And what's interesting is, since some reports and some articles put out, actually in this last week or so and talking about, what would the future of work look like, and what will 2025 look like? So, some of the things that I took away from that is that the future of work, well the only consistent thing that we know about the future of work, is that it's actually unknown.

Anne- Host:

What we'll be doing and how we will be doing it, is still unknown. So, instead of trying to fight that one of the things is to probably embrace that and to maybe moving forward, to maybe put your hands out and say, "What else can I actually do?" But some of the things that they said is that in the next five years one of the key things, the most important thing is that graduates will need to have, is that they will need to have the rounded skills to show employers that they can actually work from day one.

Anne- Host:

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So they need those soft skills and those underpinning foundational skills that employers are now expecting that, that they're not thinking that they have to then go into the workforce and then learn them. So that was really key insight to definitely the world of work, how it's changed and before it used to be that you will go and do the study, and then when you go to work they'll teach you how to actually go to work.

Anne- Host:

When now it's a critical requirement, that while you're learning how to work, that you actually have to start to develop those foundational skills immediately. So, when you get to the actual job site, day one, you're ready to go.

Anne- Host:

I love that idea, that concept, that qualifications and the way that vocation education is working is it actually allows you to build on those skills and work while you're actually learning, at the same time as well.

Anne- Host:

I just want to talk about the thinking and the decision making to do this. Because to make a decision to change a career, to move in a different direction than stay with what you do know, I would assume that, that would be quite frightening. I think we've all been through it. But I wanted to say, if you could sum up, both of you, what would you have said that would have been some of your main worries or the main risks you thought that you were taking?

Anne- Host:

I'll start with you, I'll start with Anthony first. What would you have said would have been some of the main worries or risks. If you had to list them? What you thought was?

Anthony:

Sure. Okay firstly obviously the main risk is money and if you're going to make enough money, especially with a family. Am I going to make enough money to continue to support my family while I do this? And then also, am I going to be able to do it physically? For me it was physically, am I going to be able to do this apprenticeship and just walk into this kind of new completely different line of work?

Anthony:

What's my employment going to be like at the end of it? Am I going to get a job? My life's experience of study and learning was uni, and I left that because I knew I wasn't going to get a job. So this time I had mouths to feed, and dependents, so that is a much bigger concern than it was the first time round.

Anthony:

I don't know, maybe, am I going to be any good at this, as well? This is a massive change, am I going to be good at it at the end of the day? Those were some of the concerns that I had.

So you are thinking of a career change? Conversations on making the decision to change careers later in life.

Anne- Host:

And Rekeisha? What were some your main concerns or your risk associated with doing this?

Rekeisha:

I guess, it's hard because coming from a cultural perspective as well, it's if you have children you should stay at home and have your children at home and you shouldn't leave your kids. You should be around your kids and that sort of stuff. So, I was kind of breaking bounds culturally as well.

Rekeisha:

So I guess, I didn't want to upset my family. I didn't want to disappoint my children. It was, am I going to have the appropriate care for them, childcare? Am I making enough to pay for that childcare, to then continue on with the traineeship? Is it all going to work out? Am I going to just feel too shamed and not be able to do it.

Rekeisha:

It was my inner demons that tell us that we're not good enough. Is that going to overtake my whole thinking and thought process and then I can't do it. So it was more so like a lot of personal and mental and emotional stuff that I felt was risk for me. But definitely I had mouths to feed as well at this stage.

Rekeisha:

I needed to make sure that I was able to do something but also for myself, but also be able to put food on the table. So, it was definitely a big risk.

Anne- Host:

And I actually, in the report, we talk about that, realizing that what you both just spoke about, incredibly true and it's actually been reported that it's really difficult to move out of your comfort zone, because the risks aren't just to yourself, the risks are what's happening around you. And so we put that in our brain.

Anne- Host:

So that's what you thought was going to happen, and they were your worries. So, let's look back at that in hindsight, were they such a big hurdle as you thought? Was the outcome worth the risk? Can I go back to you, Anthony first.

Anthony:

Yeah, in hindsight, no. I mean they're obviously natural to have those concerns and think about those risk, but it all worked out, it really did. I thrived during my apprenticeship. I had concerns about obviously money but you do your research and as a mature age you start on not a bad rate at all, to be honest.

Anthony:

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You go in at a fourth year rate and stay on that rate. My employer paid for my TAFE and paid me while I was at TAFE, those kind of things. You get double time, there's always incentives. So you can make it work and I guess with regards to, am I going to get a job or am I going to be any good at it? I won WA Apprentice of the Year, so I must have done something right. Do you know what I mean?

Anthony:

And I enjoy what I do and I get up for work, and it was all right. That's a good feeling. So, it worked out, it worked out pretty damn well.

Anne- Host:

Well done. And Rekeisha for yourself? How did that go with you because yours is a really lot of internal things as well, wasn't it?

Rekeisha:

Yeah.

Anne- Host:

So in hindsight, how did it work out for you?

Rekeisha:

Oh, I'm so grateful. When people ask me I just say, "It saved my life." I've got two beautiful young children. That really saved my life, like I don't know how else to say it. I can get emotional about it because there's so much more to my story and yeah, it really just saved my life. It gave me purpose, it gave me confidence. I'm confident in my reading and writing now and it's done so much more for me on a personal level and just the fact that I have a job and I'm a role model now for my younger brothers, sisters, cousins, and other indigenous people in the community and even non-indigenous. It's been amazing. My kids are proud of me and it's done everything for me plus more.

Anne- Host:

Did you have to do a qualification? Where do you think you would be without the training, the vocation training that you were doing?

Rekeisha:

It scares me to even think about that, to be honest with you. If I didn't go down the pathway that I did, it does scare me of where I would have been. And I often sometimes think about that if I didn't decide to just apply that day and just take a leap and just do it, then where would I be? Where would my kids be? What would my family dynamic look like? It really does terrify me. So I try and not to think about it as much, but I definitely needed to just step out of my comfort zone, to just jump into it. You know what I mean? To get rid of that shame, be game, go and do it and you never know what can happen.

Rekeisha:

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Just don't be scared of your fears, embrace them. That's what I had to continually tell myself, even throughout me doing my traineeship, because it was a constant battle. But yeah, you definitely, you need to put in the work and the effort. But a traineeship or an apprenticeship is perfect for somebody like myself, or like Anthony, that you need that flexibility and that nurturing side to it to understand people.

Rekeisha:

You're with like-minded people that understand those struggles as well, that can be there with you for those things like reading and writing that I wasn't very good at. So, I think definitely putting in that work and putting in that study and that brain power, it was great. I'm so glad that I did it.

Anne- Host:

And it sounds like you did get a lot of support from the training organization that you worked with and your employer. Does that sound right?

Rekeisha:

Yeah, definitely. Like I mentioned before failure wasn't an option and they did mention that several times. "Failure is not an option. No one's ever failed on my watch and it's not going to be happening anytime soon. Any hurdle that you have, becomes our hurdle and we'll be going through it together." And, I've never had anyone say that to me before. So, it was incredible.

Anne- Host:

And what about your job Anthony? I know you were saying that you had a really good, successful career in the mining and resources, what did that mean to you, what was the difference between doing the VET course, the vocational course?

Anthony:

That was the scary part, is that I didn't know what I was going to do. I wouldn't be working in mining anymore, no one I know that was in my situation at the time, still has a job in that industry. They all got the sack, so who knows? I'd be laboring or doing something I did not want to do, not enjoying it all.

Anthony:

So I think, yes I needed to do my apprenticeship. I wanted to give myself a specific set of skills to do a specific job that no one else could do who didn't have that qualification. That's what it's about. I'm a tradesman now, I pride myself in being a really good tradesman. And I pride myself in being able to get work where I want, when I want to through that qualification. So yes, absolutely.

Anne- Host:

We have to acknowledge COVID-19 has completely changed what's happening in the workplace. What would be your message to people who are thinking about it or at this

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time of their life, or to the parents or to their support partners. I'm happy for any of your advice that would come through, because you guys have been through it.

Anne- Host:

Rekeisha, can I start with you? What would your advice be?

Anthony:

Just to not give up. VET can provide you with flexibility, it's never too late to give it a go, it's never too late to say, "Hey I want to try this." So, just don't think that you're too old to give something a go, being a mature person. Put yourself out there and you never know what opportunities may arise.

Anne- Host:

So, Anthony, over to you. What advice? If you've got somebody who's at that stage, who's now saying, "I'm thinking that I might want to do it but I'm confronted with all the things in my head." What would your advice be to them?

Anthony:

VET really is for everyone, and it gets you jobs. So what I mean by that is, there's nothing special about me at all, I'm your run-of-the-mill guy, but what I achieved through VET, I think is extremely special and anyone that wants to take and run with it can do the same thing. Now this could be someone my age or older reinventing themselves, reentering the workforce, choosing something they're passionate about and then turning that into a career. Or even a young school leaver could forge an incredible career through VET. So I think VET, really is for everyone. It's accessible, it's flexible, it will give you a nationally recognized qualification and it will give you a job. That's the main thing, a real job.

Anne- Host:

Fantastic. Thank you both very much for that. I suppose that if we're talking about, do you guys have any websites or anything like that, that you would be suggesting or where could people go to get some more information. Rekeisha?

Rekeisha:

You could head onto the MySkills website, that's myskills.gov.au or you could head into your local jobs and skills center, or going into your local TAFE, or do what I did, Google search. And you more than likely will stumble upon myskills.gov.au anyways. So, just reaching out there to your local RTO as well.

Anne- Host:

Yeah, Anthony?

Anthony:

Right. Yeah, also check out the National Career Institute website. So that's a federal government one-stop shop for careers info. It's fairly new and that will also link you up to

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other areas. So it'll link you up to MySkills, which Rekeisha just said. It will also link you up to Job Outlook.

Anthony:

So on there you can jump on there and take a quiz, a career quiz, which will point you in the right direction. From there you can jump onto MySkills and find more info about that course and find someone who's done it, who will speak to you about it. So, I think all that info is incredibly valuable.

Anne- Host:

So, this comes to the end of our podcast, and I want to thank you both for the absolute honesty in your conversation of just explaining the process that you all went through to get through this. Because as we talked about, you're established people, that you had already had a bit of work life and history going for you.

Anne- Host:

So, to stop and share your story I just think is just remarkable. And I'm amazed and I'm absolutely astounded by your success. And this is on top of the training awards that you've all won that we'll speak about earlier. So I want to wish you both all the best in your future, and even for more success.

Anne- Host:

We'd love to talk to you again, as we go through. And I'd also like to thank the audience for listening. It's critical important that we give a home for vocational education and training. It is the way of the future and it is to help Australia and the economy out of its current situation. And so, thank you everybody and stay well.

Anthony:

Thanks very much for having me.

Rekeisha:

Thank you very much. Thanks so much for having me.

Anne- Host:

Thank you very much for joining us for this podcast. We hope that you enjoyed listening. If you want more information on vocational education and training, career pathways and your own way to succeed, check out the National Careers Institute website. You can find them at nci.dese.gov.au.

Anne- Host:

This podcast was an initiative of the Australian government. We look forward to you joining us for another episode in this podcast series but in the meantime, please stay safe and take care.