

MTAA Super Scholarships offer new opportunities in the auto and related industries

Industry super fund MTAA Super has named four NSW auto and related industries workers as recipients of the MTAA Super Scholarship, a sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation.

The scholarships — each worth up to \$5,000 and funded through personal donations from the MTAA Super Board members and the CEO — are designed to help individuals in the automotive and related industries pursue further education and training.

With over \$50,000 awarded to fifteen recipients across Australia, the fund will support studies in business, technology, innovation, communication, and more.

Jamie Firebrace, a Senior Technician at Jayco Albury Wodonga, said that winning the scholarship would help him complete a Certificate III in Recreational Vehicle Service and Repair at TAFE NSW.

"The scholarship brought me a smile from ear to ear. It's going to help me develop my skills and to move up in the world," said Firebrace.

After 13 years of building trailers from the ground up, Firebrace is keen to work towards securing a management role.

"As an Indigenous Australian, I strive to be a leader in my community. I want to be a role model to young kids and teach them that there is always something out there for you to do and you don't know it yourself unless you give it a go."

Firebrace said further training would also help extend the leadership skills he picked up during the COVID-19 border lockdown between NSW and Victoria.

"During the lockdown, we had technicians from Victoria who could not come to work due to the border closure," said Firebrace. "I took on extra duties and did my best to help other staff. Further education will help me provide greater service to teammates and the community as a whole."

For Emily Munro, a marketing analyst with Harley-Davidson Australia, the scholarship will help her undertake a Diploma in Project Management. It's a move she believes will open exciting career pathways in the future.

"I currently hold a business degree, but I want to improve my management skills to work my way up and establish a long-term future in the company," said Munro.

Winning the scholarship was also a great way to end what has been a challenging year for the industry.

"Coronavirus has put a spanner in the works," said Munro. "A lot of people have lost their jobs, and the way we are working is changing a lot. So, having to adapt, whether it be working from home or dealing with outside teams that are getting smaller, it's definitely been a challenging year."

Despite the challenges, Munro remains excited about her future career prospects in the automotive industry.

"It's such a big part of everybody's lives. There is a lot of cogs in the wheel when it comes to the auto industry, and I just wanted to be part of something that makes up the bigger picture. I'm just super grateful."

Other NSW automotive workers to receive scholarships were Gavin Brauer and Scott Parkes.

MTAA Super board member Geoff Lowe said that the calibre of applications for the scholarships was exceedingly high.

"We were blown away by the quality of the applicants from across the country," said Lowe. "From vehicle mechanics to students to marketers and business owners, they all had a clear vision for their future and were deeply committed to and passionate about this industry."

However, the selection process also highlighted the challenges many auto workers currently face.

"Like many industries, Australia's automotive has been seriously impacted by the pandemic and now the recession," said Lowe. "Many auto workers have had their working hours reduced or lost access to important

Emily Munro
Scholarship recipient



training opportunities. This adds a lot of pressure to businesses, workers, and their families."

Lowe said former Victorian Premier and current MTAA Super Chairman John Brumby was the brains behind the scholarship program.

"John has always been very keen for MTAA Super to actively support and promote the auto industry and its workers — both within the super system and outside of it."

"Very early in the pandemic, he raised the issue of the potential impacts COVID-19 might have in terms of hardship," said Lowe. "The purpose of the scholarship was to make a small sacrifice that would help support people in our industry for whom study or learning opportunities might be impacted."

Lowe hopes the MTAA Super Scholarships will help individuals take further steps along their automotive career pathway.

"I hope the recipients genuinely grab hold of this opportunity. Whether they're using it to help with their studies or adding additional skills, there are many, many pathways in this industry. That's why it plays a multi-faceted role in the Australian economy for hundreds of thousands of people daily."



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Scholarship recipient Jamie Firebrace (R), pictured with MTAA Super board member Geoff Lowe.