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## THE SILVER LINING IN THE COAST'S YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS

It's no secret that the Central Coast is in the grips of a youth unemployment crisis, with the region's 16.8 per cent youth unemployment rate soaring well above the state and national averages of 12.3 per cent and 13.2 per cent respectively.

While the figures are startling, it's the stories behind them that truly demonstrate their impact. Young people who are jobless on the Central Coast are facing a grim reality of either unemployment or relocation due to the fact that many local businesses do not have the funding or capacity to take on individuals with no experience.

16-year-old Harrison Duggan was one of thousands facing such uncertainty until he was offered his apprenticeship with ProTruck in Fountaindale.

Placed by Central Coast Group Training through a partnership with Wallarah 2 Coal Project to support four local apprentices in 2015, Harrison has been working through his first year of a full time heavy vehicle mechanic apprenticeship and is enjoying every minute.

"I absolutely love it and just want to keep learning more and more," said Harrison.

"I have my own mini workshop at home with a hoist and have spent lots of time with Dad on fixing parts of cars and bikes. The opportunity to undertake a heavy vehicle apprenticeship is even more exciting as everything is so much bigger," he explained.

Harrison is learning at the helm of owner Rod Maloney, who is well aware of the benefits that an apprenticeship can have on a young aspiring mechanic.

"I trained as an apprentice myself and I know how important it is to learn on the job with a great team of tradesman around you who can show you how to do things properly.

"I was delighted that Wallarah 2 and Central Coast Group Training could assist with ensuring I could offer Harrison a job – he is a great young apprentice," said Rod.

Harrison is one of four apprentices to receive funding from Wallarah 2 Coal Project in 2015 as part of a Memorandum of Understanding with Central Coast Group Training to support apprentices seeking placement in the electrical, automotive and engineering trades.

Kenny Barry, Project Manager of the Wallarah 2 Coal Project, says that the Project is proud to support the growth of youth employment on the Central Coast.

"Central Coast Group Training plays a pivotal role in placing people in apprenticeships and traineeships with host employers, helping business owners bear some of the grunt of taking on an apprentice," said Kenny.

"Wallarrah 2 is thrilled to be working with Central Coast Group Training to support four apprentices this year – it's the least we can do to help promising young men like Harrison grow their skills and learn from the best," he added.

**-ENDS-**

**For more information, interviews and photos:**

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