

APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

RHYS BALD – FARMERS CENTRE WA PTY LTD



During this past year some of Rhys's major achievements to date have included; (1) being awarded the 'Most Consistent Achievement in Mechanical Trade Award' at the South Regional TAFE Awards held in Albany, (2) being asked to re-engineer and build a new mounting hardware for a supplier with the possibility for it to now be patented, (3) being selected by his Employer to represent Farmers Centre WA in Case IH Steiger training in Sydney – revolutionary high-level training on their new Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) tractor upgrades not previously available in their high horsepower range, (4) undergoing high-level specialist Case IH Sprayer and Engine Training in Narrogin and Perth, and (5) gaining his 'Working with Refrigerants Licence'. Rhys feels these examples of the continued trust, time and money his Employer is willing to put invest in his training are a real credit and acknowledgement of Rhys's personal drive and determination to continue to excel and succeed in his chosen profession. His new-found skills this year have enabled his Employer more options to send Rhys afield for client jobs and have certainly made Rhys a valuable team member.

Rhys works in a large workshop with a team of mechanics, apprentices and supervisors with jobs frequently requiring more than just one set of hands to get the job done. Great teamwork and task-driven goal setting is an ongoing requirement to ensure they deliver to their clients in a timely manner. For example, late last year Farmers Centre acquired an additional regional tillage machinery contract, ultimately resulting in extra units being sold from their branch. The assembly required on a single air seeder is an intensive and exhaustive process, let alone 10 extra units

required to be built and delivered in the same time frame before the Seeding Season. A team of 5 dedicated mechanics and 3 apprentices worked tirelessly together, requiring great communication skills for the necessary handovers between shifts and the importance of utilising each other's personal strengths for efficiency was highlighted. The team also had to set short term goals including daily and weekly targets to ensure that they could ultimately complete the larger task of delivering the new tillage products to the clients on time. This was a valuable learning experience for everyone involved.

Rhys has good written communication skills and fills out the necessary day-to-day timesheets, repair orders and warranty paperwork to a high standard. This is essential for charging-out to customers and making claims for warranty work. After returning from Steiger Training earlier this year, Rhys was asked to prepare and conduct an inhouse verbal training presentation on the new CVT transmission for the updated service requirements for all workshop employees. This showcased his ability to share his knowledge in a public forum. Rhys feels this shows an attribute to the leadership roles he is willing to take on in our workplace. This year Rhys has also aided in the practical training of newly employed mechanics, including training them in wheel track stretches, taking younger apprentice/s into the field on diagnostic jobs, and lending a hand to his fellow colleagues by sharing his knowledge and experience of the machinery they work on.

Rhys has worked in the agricultural industry for the past 10 years, starting out as a young teenager driving agricultural farm machinery to now approaching completion of his full qualification. Rhys is extremely passionate about his job and enjoys developing his ability to diagnose faults and repair machinery. Ultimately knowing a customer is pleased with the job he has done, continues to drive Rhys to learn and do more and more for his clients. Rhys also personally loves the diversity in his job and working on a wide variety of machines all around the Esperance region, meeting a range of different people from all walks of life with a shared interest in the agricultural industry, and helping them to explore options to optimize their farm productivity using their machinery.

After Rhys finishes his trade, he plans on using his skills to further his career and take on greater leadership roles within the Farmers Centre WA team. Rhys also plans on doing a Certificate 4 and then completing his Diploma as a Mechanical Technician in the future. Rhys will always be extremely grateful for the opportunity Graham Wells has given, not only to Rhys and his personal career development, but also to his family. For Rhys, his children are everything and the reason he gets out of bed each morning. Rhys wants to show them that if they put their head down and work hard, they can achieve anything their heart desires.