

Quick facts

- Harry Smith completed the Australia-Pacific Technical College Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical Technology in 2009 and Certificate IV in Training & Assessment 2010.
- Harry was appointed Head of Department Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) at the Fiji Ministry of Education in 2010 then Senior Education Officer in 2012 - one of the most senior TVET roles with more than 60 teachers under his charge.
- With a salary that has increased approximately two-fold since achieving his APTC qualification, Harry is now able to pay for his two sons to get the university education he could never receive.
- Workplace injury rates in low and middle-income countries such as those in the Pacific are disproportionately high. The workplace annual injury fatality rate for Fiji is estimated at 19.5 per 100,000 workers³ with males accounting for 95 per cent⁴ of workplace hospitalisations and deaths.

- Fiji introduced its Health and Safety at Work Act in 1996, with the Fiji Government reporting a 2 per cent reduction in accident rates in the last ten years due to a combination of its occupational health and safety laws and recent two-year reform process⁵.

³ *International Labour Organization report of global occupational accidents*

⁴ *Workplace injuries in Fiji: a population-based study (TRIP 7), published 20 May 2013 by Oxford University Press on behalf of the Society of Occupational Medicine, www.occmed.oxfordjournals.org*

⁵ *Source: <http://www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Center/Press-Releases/FIJI%E2%80%99S-OHS-REFORMS-BECOMING-A-MODEL-FOR-PACIFIC.aspx>*



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CREATING SKILLS FOR LIFE

IMPACT Case Study

A New Way Of Training



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Driving mechanics to new standards

Australia-Pacific Technical College graduate Harry Smith's passion for improving workplace safety and productivity has taken him from shining shoes on street corners to holding a senior position at the Fiji Ministry of Education.

For the 12 years that Harry Smith taught motor mechanics to high school leavers in Fiji, he was unaware of just how unsuitable the typical attire of shorts and thongs was for a mechanical workshop.

However, after enrolling at Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) in the Automotive Mechanical Technology course in 2009, it didn't take long for him to understand why safety gear was mandatory to attend classes. It also sparked an enduring interest in workplace health and safety for Harry.

Before attending APTC, Harry earned his Trade Certificate in Automotive Engineering at the Fiji Institute of Technology in 1992 and worked in various jobs, including as a shoe-shiner, semi-professional rugby player, motor mechanic and a vocational teacher at Fiji's Ministry of Education.

In 2010, after completing his Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical Technology and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment at APTC, Harry was promoted to Head of Department. Soon after, he was offered an exciting opportunity to really make an impact on national occupational health and safety standards.

In a well-earned promotion, Harry was appointed Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Senior Education Officer at the Fiji Ministry of Education in 2012.

This position provided Harry with the chance to ensure that international standards and improved mechanical skills are integrated across the entire curriculum of the Fiji Government's TVET sector for motor mechanics.

Research indicates a disproportionately high rate of workplace injuries in low and middle-income countries. In Fiji, the annual workplace injury fatality rate is estimated at 19.5 per 100,000 workers with males accounting for 95 per cent of workplace hospitalisations and deaths.

To achieve higher standards of workplace safety, Harry is making a contribution to Fiji's TVET curriculum with the objective of developing more competency and outcome-based modules. This is a fundamental change reflected in the new curriculum and also, as Harry explains, "The strengthening of it and how strictly it is being implemented in schools".

Harry is also developing the nation's first automotive textbooks for vocational schools to replace existing Australian-based learning materials.

To support teachers in delivering the new curriculum, Harry is seeking funding from the Ministry of Education to financially assist them in upgrading their qualifications to include the internationally recognised Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, also offered by APTC.

Harry says about 30 per cent of the Ministry's 64 teachers have Certificate IV and the other 70 per cent are eager to attain this qualification.

Adopting another APTC approach, Harry is also managing a review of the Ministry's teacher recruitment and minimum qualification requirements to encourage more suitably skilled tradespeople to become teachers.

Five teachers have been recruited since Harry took the helm as Senior Education Officer in 2012.

James Knynenburg, Director of the APTC School of Trades and Technology, believes that in his current position, Harry provides the delegated authority to bring about change and impact the nation's delivery models of training and improvement in standards.

"He has recommended the upgrading of TVET facilities in schools and provided the resourcing implications for this to occur," says James.

Harry's manager, Tomasi Nabonisi, TVET Principal Education Officer for the Ministry, acknowledges Harry's professionalism and leadership skills, (supported by better knowledge of motor mechanic skills and standards).

"His leadership skills, his practical experience, and his willingness to take on any challenge, make him a very valuable employee and someone we can rely on," stated Tomasi.

APTC Trainer Automotive, Josia Macanavere, was impressed by Harry's level of dedication and commitment to his studies stating, "Harry is one of the best students I have taught. He led by example and he always encouraged other students to do their work on time."

Harry is thankful for his improved knowledge and subsequent job opportunities as a result of his studies at APTC.

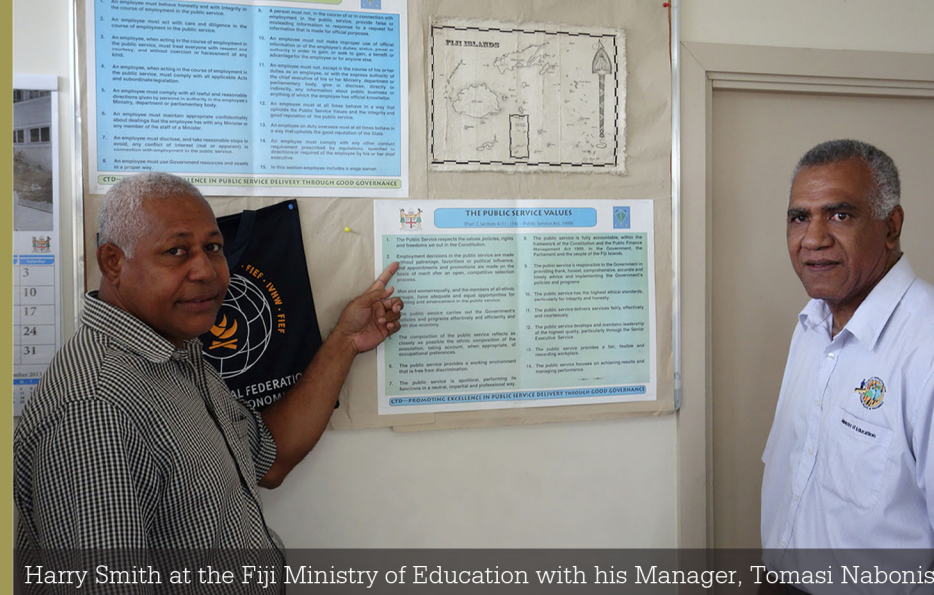
"I come from a poor background and I never got a scholarship once in my life and to receive one when aged in my 40s was more than a surprise, I was overjoyed," says Harry.

With a salary that has increased approximately two-fold since achieving his APTC qualification, Harry is now able to pay for his two sons to get a university education.

"What my parents couldn't do for me I can do for my kids, it gives me a sense of achievement," Harry says.

¹Global trend according to estimated number of occupational accidents and fatal work-related diseases at region and country level, by Hamalainen P, Leena Saarela K, Takala J, March 2008 (updated September 2008), online: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19433205>

²Workplace injuries in Fiji: a population-based study (TRIP 7), published 20 May 2013 by Oxford University Press on behalf of the Society of Occupational Medicine, www.occmed.oxfordjournals.org



Harry Smith at the Fiji Ministry of Education with his Manager, Tomasi Nabonisi



Harry with a Group of Automotive Students

Unwavering loyalty

Harry Smith is committed to sharing his APTC learnings to make a difference in his home country of Fiji.

In his role as TVET Senior Education Officer at the Fiji Ministry of Education he has initiated a revamp of the national curriculum for motor mechanics.

According to Harry, these initiatives are a direct result of his APTC studies and the focus on competency and outcome-based training.

This is the approach he wants to adapt and promote in Fiji to improve the standards in training and trades.

Moving towards a competency-based curriculum is a significant change, and this is why Harry is also strongly focused on supporting current teachers to upgrade their qualifications to include the APTC Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment.

Harry also wants to encourage "tradies" to sign-up as new teachers and share their high level of practical skills – even though they may lack formal teaching qualifications, just as he did when he first joined the Ministry.

He is forever thankful for the support he has always received from the Ministry, and has turned down offers of higher salaries in roles both locally and overseas.

He is steadfast in his loyalty to his job and in his mission to further improve workplace safety, international standards and mechanical knowledge in the local vocational training system in Fiji. "This was my first real employment and I feel I owe them my commitment," he says.

Harry's manager Tomasi Nabonisi, says the development of automotive textbooks for vocational schools in Fiji is a major project for the Ministry being led by Harry. "He is developing textbooks specific to the Pacific, in simple English language and with local examples," Tomasi says. "With Harry we feel confident that we now have the staff with the right skills to do this long-awaited task."

Harry simply wants the best for the many TVET students in Fiji, many of whom are poor and have limited prospects - just like him when he was young.

"He believes his current position will allow him to make a difference and contribute to his community and Fiji," says James Knynenburg, Director of the APTC School of Trades and Technology.

Studying pays off

Students at APTC come from all walks of life, ages and backgrounds.

Harry Smith is no exception.

Harry could not afford to finish his Trade Certificate in Automotive Engineering at the Fiji Institute of Technology, and so began working odd jobs, which included time as a street corner shoe-shine boy.

Fortunately in 1992, a Good Samaritan paid for him to finish his studies.

In 1998 he also had a two-year stint playing rugby union for the Western Sydney Magpies in New South Wales in Australia.

During this time he also worked at Ford Australia's manufacturing plant in Sydney.

James Knynenburg, Director of the APTC School of Trades and Technology, believes that Harry's "greatest learning" from his time at Ford Australia was an appreciation for the sophistication of motor manufacturing and the automotive industry.

"Above all, Harry learnt that 'time is money', and that much of Australian business and industry operates on a contract or sub-contract basis, in contrast, much of Fiji business operates on an 'hourly rate basis' for work performed."

In 1996, Harry started teaching motor mechanics at the Fiji Ministry of Education, and it was from here that his career began to progress, especially after he successfully applied for an APTC scholarship in 2008 to study Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical Technology and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

In 2012, with his internationally recognised qualifications from APTC, coupled with his improved knowledge and skills, Harry was promoted to TVET Senior Education Officer, one of the most senior TVET roles at the Fiji Ministry of Education.

In his new role he strives to improve the quality standards of vocational training, also through training, improve the occupational health and safety on worksites in the Pacific.