

LEO BUTLER



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES. PROFILE No 7

Course: **Certificate III Furnishing (Upholstery)**
GTO: **Maxima Group Training**
Host Employer: **Walter Knoll Designs Australia**



What took you into an upholstery career?

I fell into it. I left high school and the goal was to go to university. That's what they tell you to do in school. I didn't quite get the TER to get into the course that I was looking for which was a graphic arts course. I floated around for a while, did odd jobs, nothing was really fulfilling. Meanwhile I had a friend who was doing a TAFE course in carpentry and one of the side units he had was upholstery which he really enjoyed. The following semester he was going to take that up as a full time course. We were talking at a party and he was telling me all about it. I figured I'm not doing anything so I went down and spoke to the lecturer, he told me it was a good skill to have as a trade. It was a creative outlet for me as well, working with my hands, working with fabric, looking at the design of furniture over the years was part of the study that we did. From that six months full time course, I went out to find work in the upholstery industry.

Did a Group Training Organisation help you find that job?

I actually went to a place by myself and got the work there. They put me on for six months as a trial run. At the end of the six months they hadn't really seen the development they wanted from me and sort of said, we can't really afford to take on another apprentice, we'll have to let you go. My mate was working at Walter Knoll Australia and he had to leave and look after his mum, she got quite sick. He said to his boss, I know this guy, you want to give him a go? I went in for an interview and they said yeah, come in. They actually employ through Maxima. I had never even heard of Group Training prior to that. Once again it was something I fell into, but now having done this apprenticeship with Maxima, I wouldn't go any other way. The support network you have behind you there is fantastic.

What's the best bit of advice that anybody's ever given you?

Talk to people in your industry, they didn't always just fall into it. A lot of people are working in their industry because that's what they love doing. There's a lot you can take from that.

Do you think you'll get an opportunity with the company that you're with to do design work?

It's definitely an option but our Australian company's quite small. The other option I would have is to actually go over to Germany and work in their head design shop over there. Which would be another fantastic experience.

How would you advise someone if they had just left school?

It's quite tough straight out of high school. I'd say, you're wasting two or three years just doing nothing. It's a really good idea to go and get a trade and an early start is obviously very beneficial.

Knowing what you want to do when you leave school helps... but maybe you don't know.

Well that's it. I'd been working towards one goal through high school and that was a goal that was pretty much set by other people. You go to high school to go to university whether that's philosophy, a Bachelor of Arts, whatever. I've got friends who have gone through Uni and now they're sitting at home or working at Big W or something like that. I also have friends that have found very nice careers out of university, but a lot of it's very unsure. Where as with a trade you definitely know that you've got a place to go, you know there's always going to be work for you there.

That's it Leo. Fabulous.

Leo is now focused on upholstery as his profession and making the transition to establishing his own business. The experience of completing TAFE studies as a Mature Age Apprentice has had a positive impact for Leo. He is keen to pass on the knowledge and experience he has gained and so a vocational teaching position is also another career option he would value.



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