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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Empowering the Next Generation: WorldSkills Champions Youth in Trades**

The refrigeration industry will be among over 30 trades represented at the 47th WorldSkills International tournament, a global movement dedicated to promoting the skills excellence of young tradespeople playing a crucial role in the visibility, development, and empowerment of tomorrow's experts.

WorldSkills Australia competitor, Bailey Loenneker, a fourth-year refrigeration apprentice from the Sunshine Coast, and his Expert Carl Balke will represent Australia in the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning category on the global stage in Lyon, France in September to compete against the best young apprentices in the world.

The contingent of apprentices, trainees, and students, known as the Skillaroos, is the largest delegation of competitors, trainers, officials, and team management ever sent to an International Competition.

Refrigeration represents a crucial yet often overlooked trade. Despite the vital role refrigeration tradespeople play in maintaining the cold chain essential for food safety, healthcare, comfort cooling, air quality, and numerous industrial processes, their numbers are significantly lower compared to other trades on offer.

This is one of the reasons that the WorldSkills Australia initiative is supported by [Refrigerant Reclaim Australia](https://refrigerantreclaim.com.au/) (RRA) and like-minded organisations committed to the promotion and development of skills excellence in Australia.

Kylie from Refrigerant Reclaim Australia says this disparity highlights the need to elevate the profile of refrigeration professionals, by increasing awareness and appreciation for their specialised skills.”

“Our longstanding partnership supporting WorldSkills helps to Promote the importance of refrigeration tradespeople and underscores their contribution to public health, safety, and the economy”.

Carl, WorldSkills Australia Expert, emphasises the transformative impact of the competition on young apprentices and highlights the importance of the competition in promoting refrigeration apprenticeships to the wider sector.

“The competition is not only great for the young apprentices coming through, but it also lifts the profile of refrigeration apprentices which historically has remained unseen”.

In addition to raising the profile of refrigeration apprentices, Carl says the main driver for him to train and lead Skillaroos participants is seeing our young people grow. They start unsure, but by the end of the program, they're transformed, and they go on to do great things.”

“Through the competition, they develop invaluable soft skills that they will continue to use for the rest of their lives. They emerge with self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment."

"We support each other, whether it's training together or offering a helping hand. This sense of community is one of the best parts of WorldSkills," Carl adds.

Bailey, the Skillaroo for Refrigeration, shares how the competition has ignited his passion for skills development.

"Through WorldSkills, I have developed a growing passion for developing the skills I have learned. Competing on a national level and meeting like-minded individuals has really sparked my interest.”

“It's about more than just competing; it's about personal growth and professional development."

Bailey highlights the confidence he has gained through recently competing in the WorldSkills Regional and National competitions to qualify for internationals.

"Each competition has built my confidence. It's not just about winning. WorldSkills is about the experience and the education that comes with it. My confidence has grown immensely, and it's great to have supportive people around me who believe in what I'm doing."

"Competing in WorldSkills is thrilling and fun, but the best part is the time management, efficiency, and practical skills that I use in my job – these are all things I've honed through WorldSkills.”

Looking ahead, Bailey is optimistic about his future.

"I'm excited to see where it takes me. The skills and connections I've made will be invaluable for my career. I hope to continue growing and maybe help others the way I've been helped. WorldSkills has given me a strong professional and personal foundation for the future, and I'm looking forward to building on it."

Through competitions, training, and community building, WorldSkills empowers young people to achieve their best and build a strong foundation for their future careers.

For more information, please visit WorldSkills Australia: [WorldSkills Lyon 2024 Team Australia - WorldSkills Australia](https://www.worldskills.org.au/worldskills-lyon-2024-team-australia/)

For more information on RRA and its initiatives, please visit our website at [www.refrigerantreclaimaustralia.com.au](http://www.refrigerantreclaimaustralia.com.au)

Photos supplied by WorldSkills Australia.

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