

MEDIA RELEASE

Six Kiwi women shaping the future of trades recognised in Bunnings Apprenticeship Awards



Dunedin Plumber, Bryleigh Scannel was nominated for her passion and determination to open doors for others

A 202% surge in entries underscores growing momentum for women in the trades, with Bunnings announcing six standout Kiwi women leading change across the industry.

The Bunnings Women in Apprenticeship Awards celebrate and support the next generation of women making their mark in trades and helping pave the way for others to follow. Each winner received a prize pack valued at over \$12,000 including tools, vouchers and essential products to support their careers.

This year's winners included Bryleigh Scannell (plumber, Dunedin), Courtney Manu (plasterer, Palmerston North), Pohatu Matenga (carpenter, Tokoroa), Natasha Bach (carpenter, Morrinsville), Lexiga Pritchard (fabrication welder, Manukau) and Laura Peacock (arborist, Glenfield).

Entries were assessed based on how the individual demonstrated their passion for their trade to make a difference in the industry, including the positive impact of the support pack on their career development.

Head of Bunnings Trade New Zealand, Matt Heinrich, said the awards highlight the growing strength and diversity of women entering the trades.

"Each of our winners has shown outstanding determination, resilience and leadership in their field. Their stories are a powerful reminder of the important role women are playing in shaping the future of the trades in New Zealand.

"At Bunnings, we're proud to support wāhine at all stages of their careers and hope these awards continue to inspire more women to see the trades as a rewarding and viable pathway"



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Bunnings 2025 Women in Apprenticeships Awards winner and Auckland electrician Samantha Lee shared the impact the recognition has had on her career.

“Since winning the award, I’ve seen a real boost in my confidence. The prizes helped me level up straight away, allowing me to upgrade my tools and strengthen my everyday kit.

It’s also opened doors beyond the tools — I’ve had opportunities to speak at pre-trade schools and connect with others across the industry. Alongside other women in the trade, we’ve even come together to start a not-for-profit, Power in Diversity, to support and inspire others coming through.”

2026 Bunnings Women in Apprenticeship Awards Winners

Bryleigh Scannel, Plumber – Dunedin

A fourth-year plumbing apprentice from Dunedin, Bryleigh followed a family legacy into the trade and became the first female plumber in her family. Drawn to the technical side of the work, she pushed for an opportunity on the tools and quickly proved herself despite the lack of female representation at the time. She takes pride in the tangible outcomes of her work and the relationships built on site, while challenging outdated perceptions about women in trades. With plans to become fully qualified and eventually start her own business with her partner, she’s also passionate about inspiring more young women through local programs to see trades as a viable and rewarding career path.

Courtney Manu, Plasterer – Palmerston North

Courtney started out in the not-for-profit sector advocating for Pacifica families. She fell into the trades after supporting her husband with his plastering business while raising two children; taking on the marketing, accounts and client relationships. After 1.5 years on the tools, she values the satisfaction of transforming spaces and building trust with clients, while navigating challenges such as being overlooked or underestimated on site. Sharing her journey on social media, Courtney is passionate about financial literacy, resilience and empowering wāhine to see the trade industry as a viable path. Her resilience shows that age, gender and non-traditional backgrounds are not barriers to success.

Pohatu Matenga, Carpenter – Tokoroa

Pohatu entered the trades driven by curiosity and a desire to build outdoor spaces for her young son and is now in the second year of her apprenticeship. She values both the people she works with and the hands-on learning that comes with the job, while navigating challenges around confidence and being overlooked as a female apprentice and solo mum. Pohatu is focused on building her skills and pursuing future pathways such as supervision or running her own business. Passionate about empowering other women, particularly single mums, she advocates for trades as a practical, rewarding pathway. She says that trades build independence, supports whānau, and offers the opportunity to earn while learning.

Natasha Bach, Carpenter – Morrinsville

Natasha followed in her father’s footsteps by entering carpentry, first picking up work as a teenager to earn money before developing a genuine passion for the trade. Officially starting her apprenticeship in 2021, she has returned to site after taking time off for maternity leave. Natasha loves being outdoors and takes pride in creating work that will outlast her. Alongside navigating the challenges of being a young mum in the industry, she has driven meaningful change within her company. This includes improved facilities, workwear and the introduction of parental policies after becoming the first pregnant employee on site in its 50-year history. Passionate about paving the way for others, she hopes to move into project management and continues to advocate for women to enter the trades as their authentic selves, proving you don’t have to change who you are to succeed.



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Lexiga Pritchard, Fabrication Welder – Manukau

Lexiga built her pathway into the trades through a strong practical foundation in woodwork at Epsom Girls' Grammar and five years working in administration for a welding company before formally pursuing her trade through MIT. Now in her final year, she enjoys the hands-on nature of the work and the variety from day-to-day. She also values the opportunity to make a tangible difference, particularly when helping others including elderly clients. As the only female in her company, she initially faced challenges proving herself but has since grown in confidence and stepped into a 2IC role; training older colleagues older and leaning into leadership. Alongside supporting her company's modernisation, she is passionate about giving back through community involvement and continues to build her leadership capability as she progresses in her career.

Laura Peacock, Arborist - Glenfield

Laura built a career in arboriculture after leaving a bakery role in search of more varied, outdoor work. She started part-time and progressed into a full-time role and apprenticeship; reaching five years in the industry. Despite overcoming a back injury and taking time to complete her Level 3 certification, she has recently begun her Level 4 and continues to grow her technical expertise. She thrives on the problem-solving nature of the job and the strong sense of teamwork required to safely and effectively complete complex tree work. Looking ahead, she hopes to become the first female crew leader at her current job and dreams of leading an all-female team. She also hopes to explore international opportunities, while challenging perceptions about who belongs in the industry and advocating for long-term, sustainable tree planning.

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For media enquiries please contact:

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Each winner has received

- AEG Product valued over \$1,400
 - Stanley Black and Decker Product valued at \$750
 - Kincrome Product valued over \$1,100
 - Full Boar Product valued over \$1,000
 - Citeco Product valued over \$190
 - Esky Product valued over \$100
 - Green Hip Workwear Gift card \$300
 - she wear Gift card valued over \$250
 - Hard Yakka Gift card \$1,000
 - Bunnings Gift card \$5,000
 - Bunnings Merch \$150
 - Paslode Merch valued over \$150
 - Mechanix Gloves 1 year's supply \$500
- Total value over \$12,000

