

ambassador for a cause

Since fulfilling his personal vision this young builder has turned his focus on helping build the industry's future. Annie Reid reports.

Young, passionate and successful – Luke Van Dyck is arguably the perfect pin up for the building industry. The talented 30-year-old is the owner and director of his own business, LVD Industries Pty Ltd and its building arm, LVD Builders.

Based on Sydney's northern beaches, LVD Industries specialises in custom new homes and single- or second-storey extensions and renovations. With three full timers and a team of subcontractors, Luke has learnt the hard way the value of high quality and continual training, and is particularly passionate about passing on his own experiences to younger apprentices in the industry. So much so, that he was more than willing when asked to help launch HIA's Build Your Future initiative late last year along with V8 supercar champion James Courtney.

The HIA Build Your Future initiative is offering a number of full and partial scholarships each year to young people in the industry, and HIA has already received many applications and nominations. (See page 68 for more.)

'It's a great program,' Luke says. 'We never, ever had anything like this when I was starting out.'

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A third generation builder, Luke developed a love for all things building from a very young age. With his father and grandfather in the industry, as well as his whole family involved in building in some way, Luke's path was almost predestined.

One of his earlier memories is enjoying being on his dad's work sites during the school holidays. 'I used to follow him around picking up the screws,' he laughs.

His grandfather was an excellent tradesman, and had a timber lathe set up in his backyard. So not surprisingly,

Luke has 'always been interested in timber.'

Business savvy from a young age too, Luke was quite happy to finish and put his schooling years behind him and get cracking on the hard work required for his building career. He went straight into his apprenticeship and finished at the age of 21. It wasn't an easy path though; Luke had another skill that threatened to draw him in a different direction.

'I was actually a keen sportsman, and was thinking about pursuing rugby. A lot of my mates went on to represent Australia playing rugby, but I've always had a vision to built unique homes,' he says. With his apprenticeship complete, his next challenge was studying for his builders licence.

'Working every day and then going to TAFE three times a week until late was hard. But you get the rewards at the end of it'

Luke enjoys sharing his experiences as a young apprentice working his way through that licence. He often speaks of this journey to various groups and at training days, and doesn't gloss over the harder aspects of the course. 'I treated it as a challenge, but there were always some tough days,' he says.

He believes the course hasn't changed too much but isn't as intense as it was when he completed it 10 years ago. Then, he says, the hours were long and the days even longer. 'Working every day and then going to TAFE three times a week until late was hard. But you get the rewards at the end of it,' he says.





Unlike some of his building colleagues, Luke had opted to complete his licence as soon as he'd finished his apprenticeship. His mates had taken the popular alternative and travelled instead, returning after a few years to hit the books for their own licences. However, Luke's view was that it's really hard to come back to study, and the temptation to travel is strong. 'I just wanted to start working,' he says.

Luke firmly believes that promoting and education are the keys to the success of the industry. 'Once someone is in the trade, it's important to keep them educated,' he says.

While HIA holds a number of events, training sessions and programs throughout the year, Luke believes there

should be more open trade days for both the younger and more mature tradespeople.

He also suggests workshops, and even running columns in the media about what's been achieved in the workshops. A further idea is more mentoring, particularly on the tools. 'We need good businessmen and we need to open our doors. If you look at the military, they do massive drives. There are many ways to recruit,' he says.

Recruiting through schools is another way to attract young people. 'At school we used to have career days, but there was never a tradie there,' Luke recalls. 'It really is a bit of a grey area, but we need to put it out there, to educate people in schools that there is a lot of

money that can be made and goals that can be achieved.'

There are great opportunities to travel and work overseas, plus the chance to be outdoors, be physically active and stay in shape. 'We really have to educate people on the benefits,' he reiterates. While carpentry and electrician work is still the most popular, there is plenty of scope for other trades, he says. 'And with population expanding, we really do need to get the numbers up.'

In following his own goals, Luke has become a successful builder and businessman. He now has a media identity, presents at various HIA trade shows and is considered a leader in the use of innovative building materials. ►



Building in the modern age

Luke Van Dyck is passionate about changing stereotypes and the importance of promoting builders as a new generation of modern, professional businessmen. 'Building is absolutely vital to Australia. At the end of the day we are providing a shelter for our clients, and it is very important that we get it right,' he says.

While he says the majority of tradesmen are generally great people, and the industry is reputable, 99 per cent of building problems relate to paperwork and miscommunication.

'Yes, the amount of paperwork is too much, but that's just part of it,' he says. 'This is a new generation. You need to make sure you're legally covered at all times and that you're up to date with things like OH&S. If you do everything above board, it weeds out the less credible builders and the whole industry becomes more reputable.'

He believes some of the old stereotypes of builders not showing up and doing shoddy jobs are in the past. 'I don't know anyone who operates like that, and these days you just can't operate your business in that way,' he says.

Later this year he'll also be launching a new book, which aims to educate the public about the industry. One of his recently completed properties featured on the cover of *LookHome* magazine, and he has also finished a house for a well-known celebrity in Sydney.

With a specific love for combining masonry and lightweight materials, he enjoys putting his own style and spin on the houses he builds. Preferring to work on only one project at a time, the company can work anywhere but typically completes jobs throughout the Sydney region, on the northern beaches and north shore.

'It really is such a great industry and the absolute backbone of our economy'

He's also built three homes for himself – his current house is 500m from the beach. 'I like that you can go past a house that we've built and that house will be there for a long time,' he says.

For Luke, the chance to contribute to the industry he loves is well worth it. And he's ultimately positive about the future. 'It really is such a great industry

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Below:

and the absolute backbone of our economy. There is room for improvement, and that's something I practice myself,' Luke says.

He is always keen to learn something new and believes you must keep at it to remain relevant. 'It's now quite an exciting time because there's so much out there. I really love being able to give back and teach through my own experiences,' he says.

And whether it's sitting down with HIA or sitting down with government, he is a great ambassador for the cause. **H**

