



WOMEN IN WELDING

Q&A WITH RACHEL ABBOT

The WTIA has recently established the 'Women in Welding' initiative, with the objective of encouraging more females to participate within the industry.

Today, we profile Rachel Abbot, who is a technical sales representative at Lincoln Electric in Sydney. Rachel has been a welder fabricator since 2008, and has now moved into sales and marketing. She also has a keen interest in metallurgy. Rachel has been a WTIA member since 2014.

Describe your job.

I manage welding, fabrication and distributorship companies throughout central New South Wales on behalf of Lincoln Electric.

With a focus on technical sales and applications, I spend much of my time visiting customers to review their welding processes and applications. I then help these clients implement changes that ensure productivity and efficiencies in welding, whether that be changing welding processes, consumables, or technical skills. Basically, I help Australian business' save money and time to ensure high productivity levels that enable them to keep work for the future.

The 'applications' component of my role involves trialling new machines before they are mass-produced. I undertake procedural work for certain end-user accounts to promote our exotic consumables and perform welding demonstrations to help train distributors on Lincoln Electric products.

What inspired you to choose a career in welding?

My main inspiration and drive that got me into welding was my desire to be successful in life, and to have a valuable trade that could see me through any economy or city. I decided I needed to be different and do something that was a challenge yet rewarding. My inspiration was the want to be a truly

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independent, strong woman that could achieve anything I wanted. Welding has given me a career and drive like nothing else. I feel like, at times, it was the only thing keeping me on track. It has inspired me to be a better person than the path I was heading down. I owe my life to welding, and the people that helped me get here.

What is the biggest challenge for the industry?

Keeping up with the demand of cheaper parts and labour to ensure that there are secure jobs for Australians now and the generations to come.

I think a major challenge is competing with the overseas markets that seem to be taking quite a lot of our major business, whether that relates to the automotive industry or iron ore exports. There needs to be quality, safety and accuracy in all industries across the board. We are meant to be progressing and innovating to be a better industry than we were yesterday, not the opposite.

What is the biggest opportunity for the industry?

I believe the biggest opportunity at the moment is automation. We need automation to compete with cheaper alternatives, and to ensure we keep work in the country. If we don't take the opportunity to speed up production, we may lose more and more business

prospects in the future. Looking at the big picture, if automation doesn't progress, our industry will continue to be sent offshore. By capitalising on the opportunities automation has to offer welding, other businesses and industries will also prosper.

What is the most interesting project you've worked on? Why?

Every project has been interesting in its own way, and I've learnt from every single one. I think one of the coolest projects I've worked on would have to be learning about PTA (plasma transfer arc) hard facing and applying it to the project. It was interesting at the time as only two companies in the southern hemisphere had the ability to do it—not everyone knows the process and the whole application is fairly new age.

Who or what has inspired you the most professionally?

Professionally, I have been inspired most over the two years that I have been at Lincoln Electric. The entire Lincoln Electric organisation is a professional inspiration to me. I work for the best welding company in the world. My bosses are all successful professionals who inspire me to succeed and grow.

My father inspires me to work to my greatest potential. My ex-partner Paul inspired me to get into the trade and to always act



Rachel Abbot, Technical Sales Representative, Lincoln Electric

professionally. But ultimately, the drive and passion I have for welding gives me the biggest inspiration to progress and grow in a more corporate professional role. Without that I wouldn't seek other inspiration. So I guess it starts with myself.

What gives you the most satisfaction at work?

I get the most satisfaction when I enter a business (that may not know how they could better their productivity), and genuinely help them prosper as a company. Knowing that I'm a female, representing such a male dominated industry, and being listened to respectfully is more than satisfying, it is an honour. It is also a rewarding and satisfying feeling, knowing you have a strong team of people backing you and helping you to ensure the growth of Australian business for a better future.