

Geared up for work and reset for life

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By Danielle Kutchel

Sometimes in life, you need a reset: stop, put the hand brake on, and turn around.

That's exactly what Hand Brake Turn offers to troubled and disadvantaged youth.

Hand Brake Turn (HBT) provides practical, hands-on mechanical training, giving youth experience and skills in the industry and preparing them for future training and employment.

It's responding to a significant need in the community; the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Dropping off the Edge report in 2015 noted that Dandenong was in the top five percent of disadvantaged postcodes, with young people in particular feeling the impact.

Last year was HBT's 25th anniversary and the milestones continued, with the 10,000th student graduating.

Phil Bloy, who has worked at the Dandenong Hand Brake Turn workshop for 25 years - since the organisation began in Dandenong - could probably tell you most of their names.

Over the years he has seen a number of good stories: students who dropped out of the HBT course and disappeared, only to resurface years later with a qualification and a job, and who credit the tough love of the program with giving them the reset they needed.

Many of the students have already dropped out of school, and the HBT mentors encourage them back into education after completing the course.

Students at HBT receive a certificate and recognition for having completed a Learn Local course, and are then supported into TAFE or a VACC apprenticeship, with Phil acting as a broker between local businesses offering ap-



The team teaches students basic mechanical skills.

prenticeships, and HBT students.

They also teach students life skills and provide mentoring for kids who often don't have anyone at all.

HBT works closely with the youth justice system to offer a pathway to those who might otherwise not have one.

"We have a circuit breaker mindset," says Jonathan Sugumar, business development administrator at HBT.

"We offer a lot of second and third chances."

Find out more at www.concernaustralia.org.au/hand-brake-turn



Jonathan, Phil and Josh of Hand Brake Turn.