

Bathurst course revs up motorsport careers

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TAFE automotive students were put on a fast track to a motorsport career as part of a short course during the Bathurst 12-Hour event at Mt Panorama earlier this term.

Students gained valuable first-hand experience and contact with racing teams and event officials at the international endurance race for GT-class cars on the famous road circuit that hosts many events including the iconic Bathurst 1000 Supercars event.

While the students were able to soak in the atmosphere of the race — won by the British Bentley team and including high-end marques such as Mercedes, Audi, Porsche, Lamborghini, Ferrari and Aston Martin — the students also assisted teams in most categories over the weekend.

Other than getting their hands dirty working with crews for the Aussie Race Cars, Classic/Historic and Sports Sedans categories, the students commenced training that deals with safety and risk management in the motorsport environment, industry knowledge and motorsport officiating duties, such as flag marshalling and scrutineering.



TAFE NSW Motorsport Repair Team coordinator and Federation member John Ewing said the Mt Panorama campus, along with Kangan in Victoria, were the only TAFE colleges that addressed the training component with hands-on experience.

He said the main aim of the course was for students to complete some basic motorsport training units in a race meeting setting, apply those skills working on a number of different racing vehicles, then progress to placements with motorsport teams.

This has led to some students working with teams running in Australia's top-flight V8 Supercars series.

"It's a unique opportunity," Mr Ewing said. "The training is there to get the students started.

"It's a great engagement tool for us in terms of the publicity we get for TAFE automotive training and, most importantly, the pathway it presents for students who want to be involved with the motorsport industry.

"These skills have been identified as a need within the motorsport industry.

"Endorsements from motorsport teams and event organisers confirmed there is a shortage of skilled people and that's how we got this training up and running."

This course is just one of many that demonstrates the agility and diversity of the public TAFE sector, and its ability to provide skills in the niche motorsport field identified by teams and the sport's authorities.

The short course in Bathurst is free to students and contributes toward a Certificate II and III in Motorsport Technologies. This year, the short course will operate at Mt Panorama for the Bathurst Auto-Fest in March, the Six- Hour in April, October's Bathurst 1000 and the inaugural Bathurst International in November. There are still a few places available for students this year.

With the facilities at Kangan drawing international students, from motorsport- rich countries such as Malaysia, Mr Ewing is hopeful that progress on the second circuit at Mt Panorama in Bathurst will continue.

This will enable the motorsport training to expand as more events come to the region and teams use the complex for motorsport development.

With the Australian and international profile that Mt Panorama has, it should attract students both nationally and internationally.

Scott Coomber is a staff writer