

Joshua Kuriger RNZAF



Joshua is carrying out a daily inspection on a Mitsubishi MU2 aircraft during the National Selection competition at RNZAF Base Woodbourne. Inspection is one of the prime safety tools used to ensure that aircraft are serviceable and safe for flight.

Joshua grew up on a farm in Taranaki. It has long been Joshua's dream to become a pilot. He views becoming an aircraft engineer in the Air Force as a stepping stone to achieving his dream. He has learned that being an engineer makes you a better pilot in the long run.

Entering the WorldSkills NZ Aircraft Maintenance Selection competition was an easy decision for him. He always takes pride in what he does and aims to do the best he possibly can in all situations. He found the most challenging thing at the selection competition was the time pressure and finding out what he could remember when under pressure.

"At the competition it was good to see the differences between the way the Air Force and other companies like Air New Zealand do things," says Joshua.

Outside of work, Joshua is a keen field hockey player and he enjoys getting out on his road bike, hunting, fishing and diving.

Ashley Sturgess

NMIT



Ashley makes a visual inspection of the fuel filter he has removed from a Seasprite helicopter engine at the WorldSkills NZ Selection Competition.

Ashley hales originally from the UK but is now a Cantabrian and studied at Lincoln High School. He's a hands-on practical sort of person and originally trained as an Arborist but he also works part time as an Event Technician, specialising in rigging and repair of the electronic equipment needed.

He is currently $\frac{3}{4}$ through his training with NMIT and hopes to be finished by July 2026. Avionics is Ashley's passion in the industry and he would love eventually to be in a job where he is overhauling the digital instruments in the cockpits of large planes. He'd need to do further study to get licenced for this.

While he is not fanatical about planes per se, Ashley views the Aircraft Maintenance industry as the pinnacle as it requires such high standards of workmanship. He likes that the work is simple but complex at the same time and that attention to detail is paramount.

Outside of his course, Ashley is still doing event technician work and he also has clients that send him broken pieces of equipment to fix. He also enjoys getting out and about on his motorbike.

Ethan Hedge

Air New Zealand



Ethan is disassembling a fuel filter he has removed from a Seasprite helicopter engine at the WorldSkills Selection Competition. Checking filters is a typical scheduled maintenance task.

Ethan moved to Christchurch from Havelock North, where he attended Havelock North High School to start an Engineering Degree. However he soon decided that this was not the right pathway for him so he enrolled in a pre-trade course with Air New Zealand. Now into his third year as an Aeronautical Engineering trainee with Air New Zealand, Ethan knows he has found the right career path for him.

When he found out about the WorldSkills Aircraft Maintenance Selection Competition, Ethan was keen to put himself forward so he could both challenge himself and meet people doing the same work but from outside Air New Zealand. He says, "It was really good meeting the guys from the Air Force and NMIT and having conversations about how the journey has differed for everyone."

The selection competition was a challenge for Ethan because the aircraft in the competition were quite different to what Ethan works with on a day-to-day basis and he is not normally judged on the work he has done. Ethan is looking forward to the national competition because it will be fun and have a different set of challenges.

Outside of work, Ethan is an outdoors kind of person and enjoys getting out hunting, tramping, skiing and mountain biking.

Jack Elvy

Air New Zealand



Jack is removing a flight control rod from a maintenance training simulator. The simulator enables us to replicate aircraft maintenance tasks with varying levels of difficulty without needing an aircraft.

Jack is a competitive person, having been a keen rower while at Christ's College in Christchurch and playing Rugby now, so entering the WorldSkills NZ Aircraft Maintenance competition in 2023 was, he felt a good way to test himself against others.

Engineering was Jack's focus while at school and he has always enjoyed fixing things. He was able to do a Gateway programme at the Air New Zealand No 1 Hangar in Christchurch and he decided then that this was the future for him. He completed the Air New Zealand Pre-Trade course in 2020 but wasn't able to go on to work at Air New Zealand at that time because of Covid restrictions. He got work as a welder and fabricator for a year. Jack expects to finish his Level 4 NZ Certificate in Aeronautical Engineering by the end of this year.

Jack enjoyed the WorldSkills experience in 2023 and decided to come back this year. He finds that WorldSkills competitions to date have given him a broader understanding of the industry. He mostly works on jets so working on smaller aircraft in the competition has been a good challenge. The time pressures of the competition have made him appreciate having a slightly less pressured environment at work.

Kaleb Bentham

Air New Zealand



Kaleb is carefully checking the dimensional accuracy of the stiffener he has folded for his aircraft structure module at the National Selection competition.

Kaleb is an Aucklander, educated at Westlake Boys' High School. He has always been fascinated with aeroplanes and originally thought he wanted to be a pilot – until he got into working with his hands and realised that sitting in a cockpit all day would be a bit like a desk job and not for him.

All things mechanical are a passion for Kaleb. He's always got some sort of engineering project on the go at home – be it rebuilding a jet ski or fixing up cars.

Working for Air New Zealand is like “living the dream” for Kaleb as he gets to work on his passion every day and he hopes to complete his training in February 2026. He is unusual at Air New Zealand as he has been able to train in both the mechanical side of aeronautical engineering as well as avionics. What he really likes doing is trouble-shooting when something has gone wrong, fixing it to a high standard and enabling people to get to their destinations.

This is Kaleb's second time at the WorldSkills Aircraft Maintenance competition and he is looking forward to networking with the other competitors. “Everyone attacks a situation differently,” Kaleb says, “so it is great to see how the quality of my work stacks up when I am under pressure.”

Work and his home-based engineering projects take a lot of his time right now, but when he has the chance, Kaleb likes to play hockey or go skiing and snowboarding.

Liam Henderson NMIT



Liam is carrying out an Airworthiness Directive (AD) on the maintenance simulator. This AD requires Liam to remove a flight control rod and check the bearings for a potential manufacturing fault.

Liam has had an interesting career path to date. After finishing at Palmerston North Boys' High School he became an arborist and ended up running his own business. But, being an arborist is hard on the body so he decided it was time to reassess. He's always been keen on engineering, building motor bikes and racing classic bikes so he asked himself, "How can I do something with engineering that is exciting?" Aircraft Maintenance came up tops. Liam is fussy about his work and always aims to do the best job he can, so a career where achieving high standards is celebrated suits him very well.

Liam is in his first year at NMIT in Marlborough. Entering the WorldSkills NZ Aircraft Maintenance Selection competition was a case of "having a go" and challenging himself. For him it was all about getting stuck in and giving it his best shot. He was delighted that he did well enough in the selection competition to be invited to participate in the National competition. He is not expecting to win but he hopes to not come last.

Outside of work and study, Liam is a keen tramper and mountain climber and gets out into the hills as often as possible.

Michael La Rooy

NMIT



Michael is undertaking the engine intake and propeller inspection of a Mitsubishi MU2 as part of the daily inspection module at the selection competition .

Michael and his family moved to New Zealand from the UK five years ago and settled in Dunedin, with Michael attending Logan Park High School. He discovered Aircraft Maintenance in May last year and he says, "It was a light bulb moment for me." He loves that Aircraft Maintenance is a very practical skill which requires very high standards of workmanship. He is also impressed with the depth of learning that is required.

Michael was very nervous about competing in the Selection Competition as he is only 6 months into his pre-apprenticeship course at NMIT. There was a lot in the competition that he had not had any experience with but despite that he did well enough to be selected to come through to the National competition.

Michael is hungry to succeed in his career and is putting in the hard work so he can do his best. Taking part in the WorldSkills NZ competitions is a way to push himself to excel.

Tim Duncan

Self Employed



Tim is refitting a flight control rod to the maintenance simulator after carrying out an inspection of the bearings.

Aviation is in Tim's blood, with his father being a pilot and having spent time around planes all his life. He's always been into fixing things and a career in aeronautical engineering made a good way to combine both passions.

Having qualified as an aeronautical engineer, Tim is now studying for a Batchelor in Commerce at Canterbury University. His aim is still to stay in the aviation industry, working for a large company and getting more involved in the planning and management side of the industry. While studying he is also keeping his hand in with the practical side of the industry working on helicopters on a self-employed basis.

Tim entered the WorldSkills Aircraft Maintenance competition in 2023 and came in second. He's entered again this year because of a desire to do better. He hopes that being older, more experienced and more determined will pay off.

When he is not studying or working, Tim enjoys playing golf and working with his father restoring two old trucks, one from the 1940s and one from the 1950s.

William Swarbrick

Air New Zealand



William is removing the engine filter from a Sea Sprite helicopter engine while being watched closely by the judge at the WorldSkills Selection Competition.

William is now 18 months into his Aircraft Maintenance apprenticeship with Air New Zealand in Auckland. He really didn't know what to do on leaving Pukekohe High School but a friend's father, who is an Aircraft Maintenance Engineer enthused him for this career.

William completed a two-year Pre Apprenticeship course at NMIT in Blenheim and then was employed by Air New Zealand in Auckland. He hopes to have completed his apprenticeship by 2028.

He was encouraged to enter the WorldSkills Aircraft Maintenance Selection competition by his boss. He is pleased he did because it was a good opportunity to extend his skills and prove himself under time pressure.

When he is not working, William enjoys getting out hiking in the bush.