

Master and apprentice shine

Cabinet-makers
Scott Zeller and
Charles Smith are a
unique double act,
writes **ELIZABETH
BROWN.**

An apprentice cabinet-maker at Asquith has won the same national award his employer won four years ago, and will compete for Australia in an international competition in Switzerland.

He is Charles Smith, 20, who is apprenticed to Scott Zeller, 25, owner of Zeller's Restorations, which specialises in restoring antique furniture and making "decorative, one-off pieces".

Zeller won the 1993 national competition held by the Workskill Australia Foundation, and Smith has just won the 1997 competition.

The administrative coordinator of the foundation, Miss Janelle Regan, said the pair had achieved a unique double. "To represent Australia at this level, they have to be the best of the best," she said.

The foundation, which has its headquarters at Maitland, has a full



Champions at work . . . National Workskill winner Charles Smith, at the saw, with his boss, Scott Zeller, looking on.

Photograph by ELIZABETH DOBBIE

range of trades in its competitions. There were 44 categories in the 1997 national competition.

Workskill Australia Foundation is a private, non-profit body funded by grants and donations from big companies.

The 34th International Youth Skill Olympics will be held in June at St Gallen, Switzerland, where about 20 countries

will compete. Zeller came sixth in 1993 when the competition was held in Taiwan, and hoped Smith would win. "I won't sack him if he does better than me," he quipped.

Both went to Normanhurst Boys' High School but did not meet until after Zeller returned to give a talk to Year 12 woodwork students in 1994. Smith then did two

weeks' work experience with Zeller before gaining the apprenticeship in 1995. He is Zeller's only employee at the factory, in Kelray Place, Asquith.

"I'm lucky to have an apprenticeship, especially here," Smith said. "I could have been churning out kitchens."

The competitors in St Gallen will be supplied with materials and given

four days to each make the same piece.

They will not know what it is until the last minute.

Zeller had to make a stereo unit in 1993. His winning piece in the Australian competition was a liquor cabinet. Smith worked with a drop-side sofa table

"We have to be accurate to half a millimetre," Zeller said.