

School-based Apprenticeships are providing pathways to successful transitions from school to work

Numurkah Secondary College

The School-based Apprenticeship program at Numurkah Secondary College in Numurkah, Victoria is a good practice example of a small school engaging with its local industry and community and addressing effective work exploration and employer engagement opportunities.

Numurkah Secondary College is a Victorian co-educational college with a current student population of 275 students. It is located approximately a 2.5-hour drive north of Melbourne and 30km north of Shepparton, in the midst of a diverse irrigation farming district. The College serves a predominantly farming community as well as a town of 4700 people.

What is a School-based Apprenticeship?

A School-based Apprenticeship is an Australian Apprenticeship which is undertaken part-time while the student is still at school. It combines paid on-the-job employment as an apprentice or a trainee, off-the-job vocational training and secondary school studies.

A School-based Apprenticeship provides secondary school students with hands-on industry experience and the ability to work towards or complete a nationally recognised qualification, while they complete their secondary school certificate.

How do School-based Apprenticeships work at Numurkah Secondary College?

Interest in a School-based Apprenticeship for most students comes from their initial exposure to the work force through the school work experience program or Structured Workplace Learning.

Students are able to access information about what a School-based Apprenticeship is and what is involved through a range of sources. These include:

- School Career Adviser - Fay Scadden
- School Careers Webpage - <http://www.numurkahcareers.com>
- Victoria State Government - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/curriculum/pages/apprentice.aspx>
- Australian Apprenticeships - <https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/publications>
- School Visits
 - Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers (AASNp)
 - Group Training companies
 - local employers

Students interested in a School-based Apprenticeship are encouraged to complete as much work experience as possible. Whilst completing their work experience, they are encouraged to discuss with their employer the possibility of them completing a School-based Apprenticeship within that workplace.



School Career Adviser, Fay Scadden, believes that in supporting the students through the research, identification and securing of a School-based Apprenticeship, it is important that the students be active participants in the process.

Fay said, “I believe that students miss out on developing core career development competencies if someone else is doing the hard yards for them. Working hard to secure work experience, learning how the School-based Apprenticeship process works, being confident enough to engage employers in discussions about the School-based Apprenticeship means that the student is taking responsibility for their future.”

Fay writes her own careers blog and maintains the career page on the school website for students to access in supporting them build their knowledge and career management competencies. She believes that engaging with students interested in pursuing a School-based Apprenticeship is best served by providing information in a medium that they best understand and use daily.

Numurkah Secondary College works closely with their local Australian Apprenticeship Support Network Provider and Group Training Organisations in supporting the students by providing information and guidance, explaining what is involved in pursuing a School-based Apprenticeship. There is a strong emphasis placed on building the students’ knowledge base about School-based Apprenticeships and how they work (structure and support networks).

Towards the end of Term 3, students identify their pathway preferences moving into their senior years. Students seeking a School-based Apprenticeship map out plans for securing additional work experience opportunities to expand their networks and increase their chances of securing a suitable employer.

When an employer agrees to take on a School-based Apprentice, Fay will work with the employer, the student and their family to ensure the sign up process goes smoothly. Depending on the employer, and whether they have employed apprentices before, Fay will point them in the direction of their preferred Australian Apprenticeship Support Network Provider or Group Training Organisation for sign up, or to arrange an obligation free chat with one of these providers.

“The pride on the students faces and in their entire demeanour when they walk into my office to tell me that the employer wants them as a School-based Apprentice – is priceless. They took ownership of the process and are consequently rewarded for their efforts.”

Being a small local community, it is important the school develops and manages its relationships with employers successfully. Ensuring good communication between the school and employers, making them feel comfortable to raise any potential issues with a student’s learning on the job and feeling part of the education process of the student is important.

The skills that the students acquire as part of the process of securing a School-based Apprenticeship, Fay believes, go a long way in ensuring that the transition from School-based Apprenticeship to full-time Apprenticeship is a smooth one.

Students are encouraged to enrol in a vocational education and training program as a back-up if they are finding it difficult to secure a School-based Apprenticeship or if they are unsure about the type of School-based Apprenticeship to pursue.

Numurkah Secondary College has on average 8 students per year completing a School-based Apprenticeship. Considering the size of the student population and the location in rural Victoria, the College believes it is undertaking a highly successful program.



What do Numurkah Secondary College think of School-based Apprenticeships?

Kieran West, a Year 10 student at Numurkah Secondary College, commenced a School-based Apprenticeship in Agriculture and offered his thoughts and ideas about what it means to him to undertake a School-based Apprenticeship.

I am currently completing a Certificate III in Agriculture on a dairy farm in Katunga.

To commence the School-based Apprenticeship I went and spoke to my Careers Advisor, Mrs Scadden. She helped me to find the Certificate that I wanted to complete in the industry that I wanted to study in.

I spoke to my boss, who I was working for part-time, about if he wanted to put me on as a School-based Apprentice, meaning he had to pay me wages. Mrs Scadden then helped me to find a Group Training Organisation to assist in signing me up.

A few weeks passed before my training provider came and saw me to sign the paperwork. They asked my boss, school and parents to sign the agreement. My training provider provides me with some of my Modules (books) to complete. I have a series of Modules to complete within 2 years.

For my School-based Apprenticeship, I work 2 days a week and go to school for 3 days a week. My Modules involve fencing and irrigation, machinery work and dealing with cattle.

At work, I do anything that needs doing. Lately I have been fencing, sowing paddocks and feeding the cattle. Depending on the season my jobs will change. For instance, from late September until early December we will be mowing and carting silage.

A School-based Apprenticeship is a great way to start a career.

Kieran West – Year 10 student

