During the recent first school-term break, 24 ACT and regional NSW senior secondary school students began employment and training as School Based New Apprentices.

The participants in the program include students from five ACT and regional NSW schools, with employment and training provided by two ACT group training companies.

The program is aimed at encouraging young people to complete their secondary education, while gaining a Year 12 Certificate and a nationally recognised VET qualification.

The School Based Apprenticeship program

Education, she pointed out, already contributes more to Gross State Product than the wine industry and is no less important as an export earner. This was recognised by the premier when he declared in his 1997 New Year address that Adelaide should become the 'Education City'. This aspiration has now been given substance by the establishment of Education Adelaide, a statutory corporation with funding from the State, the City Council, the three universities, and support from schools and private education providers.

It is important to realise how far advanced we are towards the ideal of lifelong learning—in the near future, about 90 per cent of Australian school leavers will enter universities or TAFE at some stage in their lives. Already 52 per cent of higher education students are mature aged and even the State’s ageing population provides opportunities and demands for continued learning.

Many cities in the past have benefited greatly from the presence of a university—Bologna and Pisa in Italy, Cambridge, Oxford and St Andrews in the United Kingdom and, more recently, the development of high-tech industry aggregations in areas like Route 52 in Boston, based around the universities of Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

If Adelaide is to succeed as an education city it must evaluate its strengths and how they are to be developed. Above all, Professor O’Kane argued, “what is needed is a strong, well-articulated and well-accepted vision of the elements which will make Adelaide distinctive and attractive as an ‘education city’ in world terms”. Equally, she argued, we need to assess our disadvantages. These include our small size and ageing population—so that it is essential we become an ‘attracter’ State if we are going to produce enough business to realise worthwhile economic gains. Since people are not likely to move permanently to Adelaide, one niche to exploit would be short and intensive courses.

To bring it off, Education Adelaide will need a very precise business plan, one which allows the construction of milestones and wins along the way. Above all, it will be necessary to develop partnerships, first among education providers, but beyond that to partner events, partner institutions, partner cities and partner institutions and firms. Partnerships with global communications companies are especially important, as Education Adelaide strives to use technology to develop global classrooms.

Professor O’Kane concluded that Adelaide has the raw material at hand for such a project: “we are already seen as a cultural city, a well-educated city, and a city of ideas. We have a good education system with good links to associated knowledge industries. I believe we can transform ourselves into a State that is seen as knowledge-intensive, a prosperous State with its prime engine for economic growth being knowledge industries built around a strong education focus”.

Robin Ryan, visiting research fellow, Flinders University Institute of International Education, <robin.ryan@flinders.edu.au>
has been developed and facilitated by the ACT Construction Industry Training Council. The program is one of a number of initiatives aimed at addressing and resolving the future training and skills needs of the local construction industry.

The program is currently confined to the two major industry employers of apprentices, ACT Master Builders Association Group Training (MBA GT) and the Construction Industry Training and Employment Association (CITEA).

The executive director of CITEA, Gary Guy said that the program has the capacity to provide (initially) well-skilled and enthusiastic new entrants to the industry.

“The program also clearly identifies and provides a seamless pathway or transition from school to work for young people in the region,” he said.

Should a school-based apprentice wish to continue with their employment and training beyond Year 12, they will articulate into further trade training with their employer, as apprentices with advanced standing

The manager of MBA GT, Chris Hardy said that the program was consistent with the Commonwealth Government’s New Apprenticeship training framework and has attracted enthusiastic support from all industry sectors and stakeholders.

“Not only has the program gained strong support on behalf of the industry, it has been endorsed by each school concerned and has been given the enthusiastic tick of approval from the parents of those students involved with the program,” he said.

I don’t have to worry about the future—I know that when I complete Year 12, I will continue on with my apprenticeship

Chris Ley 17, Year 12, Canberra College

The uncertainty of the current job market is a major concern for my school mates. I am lucky because I can now concentrate on my studies, knowing that I have a head start, as well as a job reserved for me

Joe Corby 17, Year 12, Marist College

This School Based New Apprenticeship program has the capacity to address a major problem which occurs in many rural and isolated communities. The drift of our young people to cities or regional centres to find work or undertake further education or training impacts heavily on small communities such as ours. This program provides an opportunity for our young people to complete their secondary schooling and begin a career, while remaining part of the community.

Rob Martin, Teacher, Braidwood Central School
The program requires students to undertake both on-the-job and off-the-job training with their employers for an initial training period of 12 weeks (three times per year over block periods of four weeks). The training and work blocks are centred about each school-term break.

Each school-based apprentice is paid award wages while they undertake training and while they are placed in work with ‘host employers’.

In recognising a significant duty-of-care role in the program, CITEA and MBA GT have placed each school-based apprentice with a senior apprentice who ‘shadows’ or acts as a mentor while the school-based apprentice is placed with host employers.

Employers, MBA GT and CITEA have also developed strong and supportive corporate links with each individual school involved in the program.

ACT Master Builders Association Group Training has employed and signed training agreements with 16 students from Marist College and Canberra College, while CITEA has recruited eight students from Dickson College, Copland College and from Braidwood Central School.

Each school-based apprentice undertakes a structured vocational program while attending school, leading to a Certificate I in General Construction. The additional training provided by the employer acknowledges the school-based component and delivers training competencies leading to a Certificate II in General Construction.

Should a school-based apprentice wish to continue with their employment and training beyond Year 12, they will articulate into further trade training with their employer, as apprentices with advanced standing.

The ACT construction industry’s School Based Apprenticeship program is the first vocational training and employment program developed and operating in the ACT and perhaps the first such program in Australia that includes interstate secondary students.

According to Jillian Blight, manager of the MMAL-DETE Joint Venture Project, “the preparation of students for work is a community-wide responsibility and not just that of the education sector”.

Mitsubishi Motors Australia Ltd (MMAL) is an example of business making a major commitment to the training of young people to support and to improve their learning outcomes. MMAL and some of their supplier companies have formed a partnership with six local schools (Blackwood High, Brighton Secondary, Christs Beach High, Hamilton Secondary College, Morphett Vale High and Seaview High) and the Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE. More than 120 students per year take part in one of five structured workplace learning programs in engineering, trades, production, business services, and information systems.

The students complete national vocational modules which count towards their senior secondary school certificate, the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). Individual programs vary in length from ten to twenty days. The joint venture is structured so that students have the opportunity to develop industry-specific as well as generic and job-seeking skills such as communication, team-work, problem solving, planning and organising skills.

Entry into the program is competitive and designed to simulate real-life recruitment practice. Each position has a unique job description outlining the tasks to be undertaken and skills required. Employees and teachers work together to guide students in the selection of appropriate positions and in the preparation of written applications.

Applicants are short-listed against the skills of the job descriptions and interviews are conducted. Not all students are successful. Oral and written feedback are given to all students regardless of whether they are successful or not. Unsuccessful