

Project plan ✓
Targeted cohort of students ✓
Industry-specific, hands-on learning ✓
Finished product ✓
Awards process ✓

Students learn about local career opportunities

The Rutherford Industrial Estate Adopt a School project was a real partnership effort. In all it involved people from 10 mining support businesses, three high schools, a Local Community Partnership, a local TAFE, the New South Wales Department of Education, a Regional Industry Career Adviser and a group training company.

The Hunter Valley project, which will culminate with the production of a DVD, was designed to build constructive relationships and enhance information sharing between local businesses and high schools. A major focus was on how to create work-related opportunities and experiences for local students **through strategic and improved information channels**.

For the DVD, three year 10 students from Rutherford Technology High School interviewed people from the mining support businesses to find out more about career opportunities in each business. Interviews involved management, employees and apprentices.

The DVD will also cover core business practices, staffing, recruitment and career pathways. Once it is completed, it will be a valuable resource for career advisers, industrial arts teachers, students, parents and the businesses themselves.

The motivation

According to Mark O'Toole, General Manager of Inbye Mining, 'The Rutherford Industrial Estate experience was all about addressing the labour requirements of a rapidly growing local mining services sector. Businesses within the estate saw that it was essential to establish stronger ties with the local high schools and the community to ensure that there would be a future stream of candidates for apprentices and other positions within the industry.'

Hunter Valley Youth Express Local Community Partnership also thought **many people** were not aware of the potential for local careers or the industry requirements for those careers **close by in the Rutherford Industrial Estate**.

The stakeholders

This project involved many stakeholders in addition to the three young people who are making the DVD.

- Hunter Valley Youth Express Local Community Partnership was heavily involved in planning, organising and promoting the project and the work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Participating businesses were Inbye Mining (also provided project leadership and donated \$200 towards sound equipment), Terex (also heavily involved and donated \$60 towards

sound equipment), J&S Engineering, Treloar, PWG King & Sons, Tefol, Emeco, Maitland Diesel, Juganout and Ultra Floor.

- Staff from Rutherford Technical High School, Maitland High School and **Maitland Grossmann** High School were involved in planning aspects of the project.
- The regional vocation education consultant and the TAFE industry consultant helped with meetings, planning and liaison with the Department of Education and Training.
- Staff from TAFE and the Department of Education and Training were involved with meetings, student referral, work experience arrangements and site visits.
- **MIGAS**, a group training company was a source of useful information and back-up employment options.
- The Regional Industry Career Adviser assisted with efforts to recognise stakeholder contributions.

The challenges

It was **time consuming** to set up the project. Partnership stakeholders shared most of the expenses, and industry **contributed to the cost of** the DVD development.

It was important to involve the right students. From the outset, career advisers were involved in the planning and information-sharing meetings. This helped them to cull inappropriate applicants **and match suitable students to opportunities**.

Some in industry were hesitant to be involved and afraid of having a ‘bunch of school kids’ let loose in their businesses. They were also concerned about their occupational health and safety responsibilities with people so young. The solution was to get to know the young people through interviews and work experience before committing to the next stage. There was a strong focus on inducting the students and providing information to them, their parents and their teachers prior to the on-site commencement.

To ensure that everyone kept the bigger picture in mind, all stakeholders were involved from the beginning. Processes and consultations were all inclusive and transparent. And all stakeholders shared the workload, contribution and recognition.

The successes

The project harnessed a range of stakeholders who worked cooperatively for the best possible outcomes for students and industry.

The strong relationships that were built have been a springboard for some impressive results. Participating businesses have offered Australian School-based Apprenticeships and Australian Apprenticeships to 23 young people. They have also created 30 work experience opportunities for year 10 students, and organised industry site excursions and teacher site visits.

Teachers and career advisers believe the project gave them valuable professional development and resources that will assist them in the classroom.

The reactions

From a student

‘It’s a good opportunity to get into the workforce and get the HSC at the same time.’

Ben Tassell, year 10, Maitland Grossmann High School

From a principal

‘We need to work together to give the kids the best opportunities, the best chances and the best information so they can sample careers and get a taste of vocational activities and apprenticeship-based courses while still at school.’

Paul Tracey, Rutherford Technology High School

From a career adviser

‘The Rutherford Industrial Estate Adopt a School project has been an opportunity to establish close relationships with industry and independent representatives. This model had provided employer contact for work experience, work placement, career events, activities with our school and worksite visits.’

Lee Osborne, Maitland Grossmann High School

From an industry representative

‘The support of a large number of businesses within the estate was mobilised through direct contact and discussions. A number of meetings were held in a venue close to the estate that allowed for the presentation of the school-based trainee concept and time for discussion. These meetings were well supported by the local high school staff and principals, Local Community Partnership staff, as well as TAFE and the Australian Industry Group.

‘There were a number of spin-off benefits of the exercise—it was the first time that all of the businesses of the estate had got together, and this raised the awareness of the capabilities within the estate and opened new business opportunities for some. From a networking point of view, the ties within the estate were strengthened, with people able to share advice on training programs, computer systems, broadband services and other local issues.

‘I was personally very pleased with the level of support and cooperation from a group of people who were already working very busy weeks, with little spare time. We believe the businesses involved were the right size for this type of cooperation, where they could benefit from a raised profile under the umbrella of the Rutherford Industrial Estate Adopt a School Program. The institutions involved such as the high schools were able to make better sense of the project when the ties were with a geographic “group” of companies, rather than dealing with medium-sized individual companies.’

Mark O’Toole, General Manager, Inbye Mining, Rutherford

The future

This project created sound relationships and a DVD resource that will be used for years to come. It also created a sustainable model that can be repeated and expanded. In fact, a second, similar project has already begun at the Thornton Industrial Estate.

Organisers believe this project has paved the way for introducing more apprenticeships in 2007.
Another goal for the year is to increase involvement by employers, schools, parents and students.