

Bundaberg Agricultural businesses could soon see changes in the emerging workforce.

A pilot program co-developed with Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers, the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network (Wide Bay & surrounds) and Bundaberg Canegrowers saw three students from Bundaberg Christian college embark on the first set of Paid Holiday Placements this January.

After an application and screening process, the successful students were offered positions with local businesses. Kylie Jackson from the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network says 'not only does this program give students an opportunity to earn some money in the school holidays but also helps with developing those employability skills such as writing applications, resumes and interview skills' The program has been designed that so students in the program may be shared among employers to expose them to multiple elements of the industry.

Megan Terry, a Year 10 student was placed with Dean Cayley, a local Sugarcane and peanut farmer and was also shared with Dan O'Connor, Peanut Company Australia, where she was able to get a taste of irrigation and pest identification through her placement. Megan's host, Dan sent through the following feedback to one of the program coordinators " very impressed with Megan" .

'Feedback such as that is important for these programs, it's a testament that we are on the right path. We put a lot of thought into the design and how we would approach students. Being the first year, overall we are extremely happy with the results' Ms Jackson says. Megan will be placed with Dean and Dan again in the Easter School Holidays with a possible extension to be placed with a local Sweet Potato grower.



We look forward to hearing about her experience and that of the employers.



Jeremiah Hooper, another Year 10 Student was placed with Tony Chapman, a local sugarcane grower and contract slashing business.

Straight away, you could tell this young man belonged in the Agriculture Industry. With a keen interest and aptitude for Mechanics, Tony had Jeremiah servicing some of his contract equipment and carrying out general maintenance around the work shed. Jeremiah has since been offered a Small motor Apprenticeship out of the Industry but we don't think it will be long before he is back. We wish him the very best of luck in his Apprenticeship and hope to see him again in the future.

Local student Cody Muller was recently employed by Bundaberg Sugar Services to undertake one weeks work alongside local Field Officers, Michael Turner and Caitlyn Killick.

Cody is currently studying Ag Science at school and participates in the Hoof and Hook program. Experience in the Sugar Industry was of interest to Cody because it forms a large part of the local economy and he would like a career in agriculture upon completion of his schooling.

Cody was able to gain experience in many field operations including RSD and YCS testing, inspecting Rhyparida beetle damage, smut whips, soil moisture probes and soldier fly blocks. Cody was able to dig out a cane stool, find soldier fly larvae and inspect them under microscope at the local SRA facility. Cody said “the past week has been enjoyable because I got to learn and try new things that I would not do at (school).”

The Paid Holiday placement program could be considered as a perfect introduction to the Agriculture Industry. We've identified some key areas that need to be finetuned and are working closely with the School and key stakeholders to improve on the process.

If you are an employer within the Bundaberg region and would like to know how you can be involved as a host employer, please contact either Kylie Jackson, Agriculture Workforce Officer on 0488 533 801 or Tanya Howard, Bundaberg Canegrowers on 07 4151 2555.

