

OUR PEOPLE

elizabeth.anderson@fairfaxmedia.com.au



QUALITY LEARNING: IIFP trainer Robert Mugford, Nuriootpa High School student Robert Saegenschnitter and Moculta farmer Ian Koch.

EARLY EXPOSURE BUILDS AMBITIONS

Eager to learn about how the wider agricultural industry operates, Nuriootpa High School student Robert Saegenschnitter decided to undertake a school-based apprenticeship in agriculture.

With a desire to attain a relevant formal qualification before he finishes his secondary studies, 16-year-old Robert decided this path was the best option for him.

Robert helps on his family farm near Dutton, running sheep and a small amount of cropping, but he said he was ready to experience life on someone else's farm in the hope of gaining new knowledge.

"It was a great opportunity to work for someone else and see first-hand how they run their operation," he said.

"It really is one of the only ways to hear about new ideas and see how others have changed parts of their operation to meet challenges."

In just year 10 at high school, Robert is already aware that to build the skills he wants to use in his adult working life, he needs to spend some time out of the classroom.

"I went to the (Karoonda & Districts Stud Merino Field Day) at Murray Bridge, which was really interesting. It was great to hear other breeders talk about their rams," Robert said.

"I was able to meet a lot of different people who work in the industry but if I was just sitting in a classroom I would not get that experience."

Robert hopes to become a sheep farmer and is confident that having exposure to the industry and a qualification under his belt will offer plenty of future opportunities.

Next generation arrives

BY VANESSA BINKS

A FOURTH-GENERATION farmer at Moculta has taken on the responsibility of helping to create the next generation of young farmers by mentoring agricultural apprentices.

Ian Koch operates a Merino sheep stud, commercial sheep operation and cropping enterprise, and decided to pass on his wealth of knowledge to eager Nuriootpa High School students Robert Saegenschnitter and Tyson Fechner.

"It all began when a friend needed a farmer to take on

an international agriculture student in 2014 and then it just happened from there," Mr Koch said.

Since then, Mr Koch has hosted six French students and two local high school students.

"It began as a great way to get extra help on the farm but I thought it was a good way to allow younger people who do not get exposed to farming a chance to get involved," he said.

Robert began his school-based apprenticeship last year and Mr Koch said the budding farmer is performing very well.

"Other than getting the physical help on the farm, it is about helping to encourage students to get into agriculture, because really there are not enough young people in agriculture," Mr Koch said.

"Hopefully by offering the apprenticeships to local students there is potential for them to stay on as shearers or shed hands."

Mr Koch said Robert had progressed in his training and was building on his skills to assess sheep from a student perspective.

Independent Institute - IIFP training consultant Robert Mugford helped

both Robert and Tyson enter school-based apprenticeship agreements and he said farmers such as Mr Koch were integral to the education system.

"There are plenty of students keen on getting into farming but are either on a family farm that is not big enough to support being a viable opportunity for them or they are simply not from a farming background," he said.

"A school-based apprenticeship is helpful if students have identified a career path they want to pursue and it also gives them good ground-

ing to look for a position in that field as soon as they finish high school."

Mr Mugford said the agriculture industry was becoming highly regulated and therefore the need for farmers to gain formal qualifications in their field was greater than before.

"Food safety and compliance has become front and centre for both the livestock and cropping sectors," he said.

"Day to day work on the farm is becoming more complex and farmers have to be able to prove their produce is a quality product."

2018
BOB HAWKE
LANDCARE AWARD

NOMINATE A LANDCARE CHAMPION TODAY
FOR THEIR CHANCE TO WIN \$50,000

www.bobhawkelandcareaward.com.au



Supported
by the
Australian
Government.