



# Pathways in Technology for Central Coast Students

**WORDS BY JILLIAN WILLIAMS**

An innovative partnership is helping Wyong High School students secure future employment in the local food science industry by giving them relevant skills and experience.

The school is one of 14 pilot sites across Australia – and the only one on the Central Coast – to kick-start the federal government’s Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) partnership program which establishes long-term relationships between industry, schools and tertiary education providers.

Wyong High School has introduced a P-TECH program that enables students to achieve skills and qualifications in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). This year serves an introduction to the food science industry for Year 9 students, with P-TECH electives set to begin in 2018 for Year 10 students

The school’s Food Science and Technology elective aligns closely with industry as does the Certificate III in Information Digital Media and Technology, which will be delivered to year 10 students from 2018. It includes vocational education and training, industry mentoring, an adaptable curriculum, a post-school qualification and links to employment opportunities.

Wyong High School Relieving Principal, Adrienne Scalese, said P-TECH and the school’s STEM-based programs give students opportunities to gain the skills, experiences and qualifications to work in the local industry. “These opportunities are enhanced through the support of our partners who provide experiences for students outside of the classroom through mentoring, excursions, work experience and work placement,” Scalese said.

Partners in the program include local employers Mars Food Australia and Sanitarium Health and

Wellbeing Australia, as well as IBM, TAFE and The University of Newcastle. The industry partnerships give students the opportunity to gain skills and experience for both current and emerging roles in food science across departments such as new product development, information technology and technical manufacturing.

One collaborative project currently underway has The University of Newcastle and local business Renovatio helping Year 9 students to develop a video documentary on food products as they travel the food chain from agricultural plot to the laboratories of Sanitarium and Mars, to the supermarket shelves and finally the consumer.

Mars Food Australia R&D Director, Peter Crane, said P-TECH is a great way to open student minds to the huge range of science and technology career opportunities. “It’s our hope that the mentor model will enable our talented employees to spark new and exciting pathways to jobs for participating students, and to inspire innovative thinkers and natural leaders from our local area to join the growing Australian food industry,” Crane said.

Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing Human Resources Head, Catherine Frogley, said the Food Science and Technology industry in Australia is facing a large employment gap over the next five years. She encourages AIFST members who would like more information on the program to contact AIFST General Manager, Membership Services Shona Gawel. [@](#)

*Jillian Williams is the Central Coast P-TECH Industry Liaison Officer. You can reach her on twitter @ptechaustralia.*